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Framed in the entrance was a grey-haired woman. But for her eyes, that gleamed strangely, she might have been a waxwork model.

BULLDOG DRUMMOND

and the Mystery of the Studio

SLOWLY but relentlessly the mist was creeping over the moor. It moved in little eddies. Then it would make a surge forward like a great silent wave breaking on the shore and not receding. One by one the landmarks were blotted out, until only some of the highest tors stuck up like rugged islands from a sea of white.

As yet it had not reached Merridale Hall, which stood on highish ground, some hundred yards from the main road to Yelverton, though already it was drifting sluggishly round the base of the little hill on which the house was built. Soon it would be covered; it would become a place cut off from the outside world, a temporary prison of stones and mortar whose occupants must perforce rely upon themselves. And it is possible that a dreamer standing at the smoking-room window, and gazing over the billowing landscape of cotton-wool, might have pondered on the different dramas even then being enacted in all the other isolated dwellings. Strange stories of crime, of passion; tragedies of hate and love; queer figments of imagination would perhaps have passed in succession through his mind, always provided that the dreamer was deaf. For if he possessed normal hearing the only possible idea that could have occupied his brain would have been how to preserve his hearing.

Twice already had the butler entered, only to retire defeated from the scene. The cook, who had been trying to obtain a little well-earned rest herself, had then advanced into the hall and dropped a fusillade of saucepans one after another on the tiled floor without the slightest success. And finally, in despair, the staff had barricaded itself in the pantry and turned on the gramophone.

There was something majestic about the mighty cadence. The higher note caused the window to rattle slightly; the lower one seemed to come from the deep places of the earth and dealt with the rest of the room. And ever and anon a half-strangled snort shook the performer with a dreadful convulsion. In short, Hugh Drummond was enjoying a post-prandial nap.

His hands were thrust deep in his trouser pockets; his legs were stretched out straight in front of him. Between them, her head on one knee, sat Bess, his black cocker spaniel. Unperturbed by the devastating roars that came from above her, she too slept, trembling every now and then in an ecstasy of dream hunting. And

By

"SAPPER"

Illustrated by A. R. THOMSON

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the mist rolled slowly by outside, mounting nearer and nearer to the house.

Suddenly, so abruptly that it seemed as if a sound-proof door had been shut, the noise ceased. And had the mythical dreamer by the window been really present he would have seen a rather surprising sight. For the man who the fraction of a second before had been sound asleep was now sitting up in his chair with every sense alert. The dog, too, after one look at her master's face, was sitting rigid with her eyes fixed on the window. Volleys of saucepans might be of no avail, but the sound which had caused this instantaneous change was different. For from the direction of the main road had come the crack of a rifle.

STILL with his hands in his pockets, Hugh Drummond got up and crossed to the window. The mist was not more than twenty yards away, and for a while he stared down the drive. Who could be firing on a day like that? And yet he knew that he had not imagined that shot.

Suddenly his eyes narrowed, the figure of a man running at top speed came looming out of the fog. The man raced towards the house, and on his face was a look of abject terror. And the next moment Hugh heard the front door open and shut, and the sound of footsteps in the hall outside.

"Down, girl," he ordered quietly, as Bess began to growl. "It would seem that there are doings abroad."

He strode to the door and stepped into the hall. Cowering in a corner was a young man, whose breath still came in great choking gasps, and whose trembling hands gave away the condition he was in. For a moment or two he stared at Drummond fearfully. Then getting up he rushed over to him and seized his arm.

"For God's sake save me," he stammered. "They're after me."

"Who are after you?" asked Drummond quietly, and even as he spoke there came a ring at the door, accompanied by an imperative tattoo on the knocker.

"Quick! Tell me!" he went on, but he spoke to empty air. For with a cry of terror the youngster had darted into the smoking-room and shut himself in.

There came a further loud knocking, and with a shrug of his great shoulders Drummond crossed the hall and opened the front door. Outside stood two men in uniform, each with a rifle slung over his back, and he recognized them at once as warders from Dartmoor.

"Good afternoon," he said affably. "What can I do for you?"

The senior touched his cap.

"Do you mind if we search your outbuildings, sir?" he said. "A man we're after disappeared up your drive, and got away in the fog. But he must have come here. There ain't nowhere else he could have gone."

"Who is this fellow you're looking for?" asked Drummond.

"A mighty dangerous customer, sir," said the warder. "You look as if you could take care of yourself all right, but there are a good many people round here who won't sleep happy in their beds till we've got him under lock and key again. It's Morris, sir, the Sydenham murderer; escaped in the mist this morning. And a more brutal devil never breathed."

Drummond raised his eyebrows. Anyone less like a brutal murderer than the frightened youngster who had taken sanctuary in the house it would have been hard to imagine.

"Very near killed a warder this morning," went on the officer. "And then dodged away across the moors. Of course, with a face like his he never had a chance from the beginning, but if he is here, sir, as we think, we'll take him along with us."

"What is the peculiarity about his face?" demanded Drummond.

"He's got a great red scar down one cheek," said the warder.

"I see," said Drummond. "Look here, officer, there has evidently been some error. It is perfectly true that a man dashed into this house just before you arrived and implored me to hide him. But it is equally true that from your description he is not Morris. So we will elucidate the matter. Come in."

He crossed the hall to the smoking-room with the two warders at his heels.

"Now then, young feller," he cried as he flung open the door, "what's all this song and dance about?—I presume this is not the man you want." He turned to the warders, who were staring in a bewildered way at the panic-stricken youth cowering behind a chair.

"Never seen the gentleman before in my life, sir," said one of them at length.

"Get up, man," remarked Drummond, contemptuously. "No one is going to hurt you. Now, then," he continued as the youth slowly straightened himself and came out into the room, "let's hear what happened."

"Well, sir," said the one who was obviously the senior of the two officers, "it was this way. My mate and I were patrolling the road just by where your drive runs into it. Suddenly behind the gate-post we saw someone move, someone who it seemed to me had been hiding there. In this fog one

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can't see much, and it wasn't possible to make out the face. But when he sprang to his feet and rushed away it naturally roused our suspicions. So I fired a shot wide, as a warning, and we followed him up here."

"But surely you could have seen he wasn't in convict's kit?" said Drummond.

"The first thing an escaped man does, sir, is to steal a suit of civvies. He either lays out some bloke he meets and strips him, or he breaks into a house. And a man like Morris, who is as powerful as they make 'em, and is absolutely desperate into the bargain, wouldn't stick at either course. I'm sorry, sir," he continued to the youngster, "if I've given you a fright. But you must admit that your behaviour was hardly that of a man who had nothing to fear."

"I quite agree," said Drummond tersely. He was covertly examining the youngster as he spoke, and there were times when those somewhat lazy eyes of his could bore like gimlets. But his next remark gave no indication of his thoughts.

"A drink, my stout-hearted sportsmen," he boomed cheerfully. "And good hunting to you. By the way," he went on, as he produced glasses and a tantalus, "you say this man is a murderer. Then why didn't they hang him?"

"Don't you remember the case, sir? About four years ago. An old man was found with his head bashed in, in some small street in Sydenham. They caught this fellow Morris and they found him guilty. And then at the last moment the Home Secretary reprieved him and he got a lifer. Some legal quibble, and he got the benefit of the doubt."

The warder smiled grimly.

"It's not for the likes of me to criticize the decision," he went on, "but I'd willingly bet my chances of a pension that he did it."

"That's so," agreed his mate.

"A more callous, brutal swine of a man never drew breath. Well, sir, we must be getting along. Here's your very good fortune."

The two warders raised their glasses.

"And if I might make so bold as to advise you, sir, I'd have a pretty sharp look round to-night. As I said before, from the looks of you, Mister Morris would find he'd met his match. For all that, he's a desperate man, and he might get at you while you were asleep."

He put down his empty glass.

"And as for you, sir," he went on, turning to the youngster into whose cheeks a little colour had returned, "all I can say is, once again, that I'm sorry. But it's a dangerous thing to run from an armed warder, in a fog, down these parts, when a convict has escaped that very day. Good afternoon, gentlemen—thanking you very much again."

THE two men picked up their hats, and Drummond went with them to the front door. Then he returned to the smoking-room, and having lit a cigarette he threw himself into an armchair and signed to the youngster to do likewise.

"Now, young feller," he said quietly, "it strikes me that there is rather more in this affair than meets the eye. You wake me from a refreshing doze, by dashing into the house with a remark that they are after you, and it then turns out to be a completely false alarm. Why should you think that two warders were after you?"

"In the mist I didn't realize they were warders," stammered the other.

And once again Drummond stared at him thoughtfully.

"I see," he remarked. "Then whom, may I ask, did you mean by 'they'?"

"I can't tell you," muttered the other. "I daren't."

"As you will," said Drummond, casually. "I must confess, however, to a certain mild curiosity as to the identity of people who can reduce anyone to such a condition of pitiable funk as you were in. Also as to why you should anticipate meeting them on Dartmoor in a fog. Incidentally, my name is Drummond—Captain Drummond. What's yours?"

"Marton," said the other, fumbling in his pocket for his cigarette-case.

For a while Drummond looked at him in silence. The youngster was clearly a gentleman: his age he put down at about twenty-one or two. His face was good-looking in a weak sort of way, and though he had the build and frame of a big man, he was obviously in rotten condition. In fact, it would have been impossible to produce a better specimen of the type that Drummond despised. If fit, Marton would have been big enough and strong enough for anything on two legs; as he was, one good punch and he would have split like a rotten apple.

Drummond watched him light a cigarette with a trembling hand, and then his glance travelled over his clothes. Well cut; evidently a West-end tailor, but equally evident West-end clothes. And why should a man go careering about Dartmoor dressed as he was and in fear of his life? Was it just some ordinary case of a youngster absconding with cash, whose nerves had brought him to the condition he was in? Or could it be that there was something more in it than that? And at the bare thought of such a possibility Drummond's eyes began to glisten.

Life had been intolerably dull of late. In fact, since the affair with the masked hunchback on Romney Marsh nothing had happened to make it even bearable. He had shot and fished and consumed innumerable kippers in night clubs, but beyond that nothing—positively nothing. And how could it be possible that, as the result of a sudden whim which had caused him to spend a week with Ted Jerningham, something amusing was going to happen? The chances were small, he reflected sadly, as he again looked at Marton. Still, it was worth trying. But the youngster would have to be handled carefully if anything was to be got out of him.

"Look here, Marton," he said not unkindly, "it seems to me that you're in a condition when it will do you no harm to shoot your mouth to somebody. I'm considerably older than you, and I'm used to handling tough situations. In fact, I like 'em. Now, what's all the trouble about?"

"There's no trouble," answered the other sullenly. "At least, none where anyone else can help."

"Two statements that hardly tally," remarked Drummond. "And since the first is obviously a lie we will confine ourselves to the second. Now, might I ask what you are doing in that rig down here, hiding behind the gate-post of this house?"

"I tell you I saw them looming out of the fog" cried the other wildly. "And I thought—I thought——"

"What did you think?"

"I just lost my head and bolted. And then when one of them fired——" He broke off and stared round the room. "What is this house?"

"Merridale Hall," said Drummond quietly. "Now out with it, young feller. What have you been up to? Pinching boodle or what?"

"I wish it was only that." Marton lit another cigarette feverishly, and Drummond waited in silence. If he was trying to bring himself up to the point of telling his story, it would be better to let him do it in his own way. "God! What a fool I've been!"

"You're not the first person to say that," Drummond remarked. "But in what particular line have you been foolish?"

His curiosity was increasing now that any question of money was ruled out. However poor a specimen Marton might be, there must be something pretty seriously wrong to produce such a result on his nerves. So once again Drummond waited, but after a while the other shook his head.

"I can't tell you," he muttered. "I daren't."

"You young fool," said Drummond contemptuously, losing his patience. "What on earth is there to be frightened of? Your affairs don't interest me in the slightest, but you've made a confounded nuisance of yourself this afternoon, and frankly I've had enough of you. So unless you can pull yourself together and cease quivering like a frightened jelly, you'd better push on to wherever you're going."

HE had no intention whatever of turning the young man out of the house, but it struck him that the threat might produce some coherence in the other. And his surprise was all the greater at the unexpected answer he received. For the youngster for the first time pulled himself together and spoke with a certain quiet dignity.

"I'm sorry, Captain Drummond," he said. "And I apologize for the exhibition I've made of myself. I know my nerves are all to tatters, and though it was my fault in the beginning, it hasn't been entirely so since. And so, if I might ask you for a whisky-and-soda, I'll be getting on."

"Now," said Drummond cheerily, "you're beginning to talk. I was trying to get you into some semblance of coherence, that's all. There can be no question whatever of your leaving to-night; you'd be lost in this fog in half a minute. And I know that my pal Jerningham, whose house this is, will agree with me when he gets back—that is, if he gets back at all; with this weather he'll very likely stay the night in Plymouth. So here's a drink, young feller, and again I tell you candidly that if you're wise you won't bottle this thing up any more. Whatever it is I won't give you away, and unless it's something dirty I may be able to help you."

Marton drained his glass, and into his eyes there came a look of dawning hope.

"Good Lord!" he cried. "If only you could. But I'm afraid it's beyond anyone. I've got to go through with it myself. Still, it will be an awful relief to get it off my chest. Do you go much to London?"

"I live there," said Drummond.

"And do you go about a good deal?"

"I trot round," remarked the other with a faint smile, "the same as most of us do."

"Have you ever run across a woman called Comtessa Bartelozzi?"

Drummond thought for a moment, and then shook his head.

"Not that I know of. She's a new one on me. Hold hard a minute. We'll have the other half section before you go on."

He rose and crossed to the side table, carrying Marton's glass and his own. So there was a woman in the situation, was there? Name of Bartelozzi. Sounded a bit

theatrical; might be real—might be false. And as for the title, Comtessas grew like worms in a damp lawn. In fact, he was so occupied with his thoughts and the mixing of two drinks that he failed to see the hard hatchet face of a man that for one second was pressed against the window. And Marton, who had his back to it, also sat on in ignorance that, in that fleeting instant, every detail of the room had been taken in by the silent watcher outside.

"Now, then," said Drummond, returning with the glasses, "we've got as far as the Comtessa Bartelozzi. Is she the nigger, or rather negress, in the wood pile?"

"If only I'd never met her," said the other. "I was introduced to her one night at the Embassy, and—— Great Scott! what's that?"

From outside had come the sound of a crash. It was some distance away, but in the still air it was clearly audible. And it was followed almost immediately by a flood of vituperation and loud shouts of "Hugh!" Drummond grinned gently, and going to the window opened it.

"Hullo, Peter!" he shouted. "What has happened, little one?"

"That flat-footed idiot Ted has rammed the blinking gate-post!" came an answering shout. "We've taken two and a half hours to get here from Plymouth, most of the time in the ditch, and now the damned fool can't even get into his own drive."

The voice was getting nearer.

"What's Ted doing, Peter?" demanded Drummond.

"Sitting in the car drinking whisky out of my flask. Says that God doesn't love him, and that he won't play any more."

Peter Darrell loomed out of the fog and came up to the window.

He swung round in his chair; his jaw dropped; wild terror shone in his eyes.

"Hullo!" he muttered. "Who is the boy friend?"

"We'll go into that after," said Drummond. "Does Ted propose to sit there the whole night?"

"He says he wants you to come down and help," answered Darrell. "The car is half stuck, and you can barely see your hand in front of your face."

"All right, I'll come. You wait here, Marton, and carry on with your yarn later."

"Bring a torch, old boy," went on Darrell. "Not that it's much use, but it might help to pilot him up the drive."

"There's one in the hall," said Drummond. "I'll get it. And, Marton, you'll find cigarettes in the box there."

HE got the torch and joined Darrell outside. And as they disappeared into the mist, their feet crunching on the gravel, two dim figures crouching near the wall began to creep slowly towards the

open window. Their footsteps were noiseless in the earth of the flower-bed that bordered the wall, and the youngster sat on in utter ignorance of the fate that was threatening him. A good sort, this Captain Drummond, he reflected. Was it possible that he would be able to help him? And even as the dawn of hope began in his mind there came a sound from behind him. He swung round in his chair; his jaw dropped; wild terror shone in his eyes. Not a yard away stood the man he had seen only once before—but that once had been enough.

He gave a hoarse choking cry and tried to get up. And as he moved he felt his neck held in a vice-like grip. He struggled feebly, staring into the cruel, relentless eyes of his assailant. And then there came a roaring in his ears; the room spun round until at length everything grew black.

"Take his hat, Steve, and then give me a hand with the young swine. Those guys may be back at any moment."

"Have you killed him?" asked the second man.

"No. But we'll have to carry him. I guess it's the first time I've been thankful for this darned fog."

And a few moments later the only moving thing in the smoking-room was the mist that eddied in through the open window, whilst, all unconscious of what had happened, Drummond and Darrell were groping their way down the drive.

"All sorts of excitement here, Peter," said Drummond. "There is an escaped murderer wandering about at large——"

"We heard in Plymouth that a convict had got away. Poor devil. I'd sooner be tucked up in my cell than wandering about this bit of the country on a night like this."

"And then the arrival of that youth."

"He seems a rather leprous-looking mess, old boy."

"Nothing to what he was when he first appeared. He's just beginning to tell me the secret of his young life. Evidently got into the deuce of a hole somehow, and probably wants the seat of his pants kicked good and hearty. However, Ted will have to give him a shake-down—can't turn him out in this fog. And we'll hear what the worry is."

"Doesn't sound a particularly absorbing evening's entertainment," remarked Darrell, dubiously.

"Probably not," agreed Drummond. "But there's just a bare possibility it might lead to some amusement. And, by gad! Peter, anything would be welcome these days."

"A drink most emphatically would be," said the other. "Here is the car."

The side lights suddenly showed up a yard in front of them, and Darrell demanded his flask.

"Finished, dear old lad," came Jerningham's voice, happily. "Quite, quite finished. What an infernal time you've been! Now, if you'll both push hard, I'll get her into reverse, and we ought to do it."

THE wheels skidded on the greasy turf, but with Drummond's great strength to help they at length got her into the road.

"The gate is open, Ted," he said. "Wait a moment now until I mark the right-hand pillar with the torch."

He stood beside it, throwing the light down on the ground, and as he did so a piece of paper lying at his feet caught his eye. It was clean and looked like a letter, and almost mechanically he picked it up and put it in his pocket as the car went slowly past him. Then leaving Darrell to shut the gate, he piloted Jerningham up the drive until they got to the house.

"Parker can put her away," remarked the owner, getting out. "Jove! old boy, we've had an infernal drive."

"I thought you'd probably stay in Plymouth, Ted," said Drummond.

"It wasn't too bad when we started," said Jerningham. "Was it, Peter? Let's get into the smoking-room and I'll ring for someone to get your kit."

"Wait a moment, Ted," said Drummond. "There's a visitor."

"A visitor! Who the devil has rolled up on an evening like this?"

"Fellow by the name of Marton," went on Drummond, lowering his voice. "He's a pretty mangy piece of work, and he's in a state of mortal terror over something or other. He'd just begun telling me about it when you arrived. I'll tell you the beginning of the thing later on, but treat him easy now. He's as frightened as a cat with kittens."

He opened the smoking-room door.

"Now, then, Marton, here's the owner——"

He broke off abruptly: the room was empty. And for a while the three of them stared round in silence.

Drummond stepped into the hall and shouted. And the only result was the arrival of the butler.

"Jennings, have you seen a young gentleman lying about anywhere?" he asked.

"No, sir," said the butler, looking slightly bewildered. "What sort of a young gentleman?"

"Any sort, you old fathead," said Jerningham, and once again Drummond shouted "Marton" at the top of his voice.

They waited, and at length Jerningham spoke.

"Your young friend has apparently hopped it, old boy," he remarked. "And if, as you say, he's a bit of a mess, I shouldn't think he's much loss. Get Mr. Darrell's kit out of the car, Jennings, and tell Parker to put her in the garage."

He led the way back into the smoking-room, and Drummond followed slowly. To the other two the matter was a trifling one: a youngster whom neither of them had met had come and gone. But to him the thing was much more puzzling. Even if Marton's terror had finally proved groundless, it had been very real to him. And so what had induced him to leave a place where he knew he was safe? And why had they not met him going down the drive?

"There's something damned funny about this, you chaps," he said, thoughtfully. "I'll tell you the whole tale."

THEY listened in silence as he ran over the events of the afternoon, and when he'd finished Jerningham shrugged his shoulders.

"It seems pretty clear to me, old boy," he remarked. "When you left him and he began to think things over he came to the conclusion that he'd been talking out of his turn. He realized that, having once started, it would be difficult for him not to continue. Possibly, too, what he might have been prepared to tell to you alone he funked giving tongue to before a bunch of us. And so he decided to beat it while the going was good, which would get him out of his dilemma. And that answers your query about not meeting him as he came up the drive. Naturally, he didn't want to be seen, so he just stood a couple of yards in on the grass as we went past. In this fog we'd never have spotted him."

"That answers it, Ted, I agree," said Drummond. "And yet I'm not satisfied. Don't know why, but there it is. By the same token, do either of you blokes know this Comtessa Bartelozzi?"

They both shook their heads.

"I don't see that there is anything to be done," said Jerningham. "He's not here, and that's an end of it. And the point that now arises is what the deuce we're going to do to-night. I'd ring up the doctor and ask him round for a rubber, but I doubt if he'd get here. What are you staring at, Hugh?"

Drummond had his eyes riveted on a spot on the carpet, and suddenly he bent down and touched it with his fingers. Then he gave a low whistle and straightened up.

"I knew I was right," he said, quietly. "It's earth. And more there—and there. Somebody has been in through the window, Ted. And look at those two marks close by the chair Marton was sitting in. Whoever it was who came in stood by that chair."

"Come here," called out Darrell, who with the electric torch in his hand was leaning out of the window. "There are footmarks all along the flower-bed."

"Let's get this clear," said Jerningham. "You're certain those marks weren't there before?"

"That mud is still damp. I was asleep here after lunch until young Marton arrived, and all that time the window was shut. In fact, it was never opened till I heard Peter shouting."

"What about the two warders?"

"Neither of them ever went near the window. Nor did Marton. Lord! man, it's as clear as be damned. It's a definite trail from the window to the chair the youngster was sitting in."

"There's no sign of a struggle," said Darrell.

"Why should there have been one?" demanded Jerningham. "It may have been some bloke he knew with whom he toddled off all friendly like."

"Seems to me there are two pretty good objections to that," said Drummond. "In the first place, how did anyone know he was here? Secondly, if it was a pal who, by some extraordinary fluke, arrived at the window, why did he bother to come into the room? Why not just call out to him?"

He shook his head gravely.

"No, as I see it, there's only one solution that fits. The visitor was Morris—the escaped convict. He was lying hidden in the garden and seized his chance when he saw Marton alone."

"By Jove! that's possible," said Darrell, thoughtfully.

"But, damn it—why should he go off with a bally convict?" demanded Jerningham.

"Probably Morris dotted him one over the head," said Drummond, "then dragged him outside, and, hidden by the fog, stripped him. It's the very point the warders mentioned. The first thing an escaped man does is to try and get civilian clothes."

"Then in that case the wretched fellow is probably lying naked in the shrubbery," cried Jerningham. "We'd better have a search party; though our chances of finding him, unless we walk on top of him, are a bit remote."

"Doesn't matter. We must try," said Drummond. "Got any lanterns, Ted?"

"I expect Jennings can produce something," answered Jerningham. "Though I'm afraid it's pretty hopeless."

He rang the bell, and as he did so there came from outside the sound of footsteps

on the drive. All three stared at the window expectantly. Was this Marton coming back? But it was one of the warders who materialized out of the mist, to be followed a moment or two later by his mate.

"Beg your pardon, gentlemen," he said, "but as I was passing I thought I'd let you know that Morris was seen about a quarter of a mile from here an hour ago. So warn your servants to keep the windows shut and the doors bolted."

"I'm rather afraid it's a bit late, officer," said Drummond. "Unless I'm very much mistaken, Morris has been here within the last quarter of an hour. And those"—he pointed to the marks of mud—"are his tracks."

"But what were you doing, sir?"

"Helping Mr. Jerningham to get his car out of the ditch. You remember that youngster who was here? Well, I left him in this room, and when I came back he was gone. And the only possible solution that I can think of is that Morris laid him out in order to get his clothes. We're just going to have a search through the grounds now."

"I've told Jennings to get lanterns," said Jerningham.

"Possibly you're right, sir," said the warder. "He'd seize a chance like that. But there is another thing that may have happened—the young gentleman may have joined his friends."

"What friends?" demanded Drummond.

"Well, sir, just after me and my mate left you this afternoon and got into the main road, we ran into two gentlemen walking along. So we stopped them and warned them about Morris. One of them, a great, big, powerful-looking man he was, began to laugh.

"'Thank you, officer,' he says. 'But if this guy Morris tries any funny stuff with me he won't know whether it was a steam-hammer or a motor lorry that hit him.'

"'No, sir,' I answers; 'you look as if you could take care of yourself—same as another gent I've just been talking to.' Meaning you, sir, of course." He turned to Drummond. "Well, he seemed interested like," went on the warder, "and so I told him what had just happened, about the young gentleman being in such a panic and all that.

"'Can you describe him?' says he, and when I done so, he turns to his friend.

"'Quite obviously, it's the boy we were expecting,' he says. 'The poor lad must have lost his way in the fog. Up there, is he, officer? And what is the name of the house?'

"'Merridale Hall,' I tells him. 'You can't miss it. You are only thirty yards from the entrance gate.'

"And with that he says good afternoon and walks on. So I should think, sir, that in this case that is what happened. The young gentleman went off with his friends. Not that what you thought wasn't very probable; Morris would stick at nothing. And, of course, you didn't know anything about these two gents."

"No," said Drummond slowly, "I didn't. They did not, by any chance, say where they were stopping?"

"No, sir. They didn't. Well, good night, gentlemen: we must be getting along."

"IT seems to me," said Drummond, as the footsteps of the two warders died away, "that we have at any rate established the fact that Marton's story was not entirely a cock-and-bull one. Nor was it mere groundless panic."

"I'm darned if I see why," said Jerningham. "Anyway, we shan't want those lanterns now, I take it."

He went to the door and shouted the fact to Jennings. Then he came back to his chair.

"Those warders," went on Drummond quietly, "met these two men just outside the gate. Now it would have taken them, at the most, two minutes to walk up the drive. At a conservative estimate it was at least twenty minutes after when you two rammed the gate-post. What do you suggest they were doing during the gap? Why, if they were friends of Marton, didn't they ring the front-door bell and inquire if he was here? Why, when they finally did come in, did they come in through the window? No, my boy—it's a fiver to a dried orange pip that those two men are the 'they' he was so terrified of. And now, owing to the mere fluke of that warder meeting them, they've got him."

"I'll grant all that, old lad," said Jerningham. "But what I want to know is what the deuce you propose to do about it? You don't know where these men are living. You don't know anything about 'em. All we do know is that the boy's name is Marton, which cannot be called a very uncommon one."

"Afraid I'm rather inclined to agree with Ted, old boy," said Darrell. "Doesn't seem to me that we've got anything to go on. True, we know about this female—Bartelozzi or whatever her name is—but as she is presumably in London, that doesn't help much."

Drummond gave a sudden exclamation, and pulled out of his pocket the piece of paper he had found on the drive.

"I clean forgot all about this," he said, opening it out. "Picked it up by the gate-post."

The convict fell upon like a famished wolf.

"Anything interesting?" cried Darrell, as he watched Drummond's face.

Without a word, Drummond laid it on the table, and they all three stared at it. It was an ordinary piece of office notepaper, with the name and address of the firm stamped at the top.

MARTON, PETERS & NEWALL,
Solicitors.
134, NORFOLK STREET,
STRAND, W.C.2.

Underneath was written in pencil the two words: Glensham House.

"At any rate, that establishes something else," remarked Jerningham. "A point that does give us a foundation to work on. Glensham House is about half a mile down the road towards Yelverton."

"The deuce it is," said Drummond, his eyes beginning to gleam.

"It's a big house, and it's been empty for some years. They say it's haunted, but that is probably poppycock. It has

recently been let to a wealthy American, who has installed a housekeeper, and is, I believe, shortly coming to live there himself."

"Things are marching," remarked Drummond. "It is, I take it, a fair assumption that Glensham House was Marton's objective?"

The other two nodded.

"It is also, I take it, another fair assumption that the Marton who seems to be the senior member of the firm is this fellow's father or uncle?"

"Go up top," murmured Darrell.

"Why, then, my stout-hearted warriors, should the junior bottle-washer of a firm of respectable lawyers be wandering about Dartmoor in such a state of abject terror?"

"Wait a moment," said Jerningham, suddenly. "Where have I heard or seen the name of that firm recently? By Jove! I believe I've got it."

He crossed the room and picked up the morning paper.

"Here it is," he cried excitedly. "I knew I wasn't mistaken."

TRAGEDY AT SURBITON.
LONDON LAWYER'S DEATH.

A shocking tragedy occurred yesterday at 4, Minchampton Avenue, Surbiton, the residence of Mr. Edward Marton, senior partner of the well-known firm of solicitors of Norfolk Street, W.C.2—Marton, Peters, and Newall. Mr. Edward Marton, who was a very keen sportsman, went into his smoking-room after dinner with the intention of overhauling his guns. A few minutes later his wife and daughters, who were sitting in the drawing-room, were alarmed by the sound of a shot. They rushed into the smoking-room, and were horrified to find Mr. Marton lying on the carpet with a dreadful wound in his head. A gun was by his side, and some cleaning materials were on the table close by. A doctor was at once summoned, but the unfortunate gentleman was beyond aid. In fact, the medical opinion was that death had been instantaneous. It is thought that Mr. Marton, who frequently shot during the week-end, must have taken down his gun for the purpose of cleaning it. By some fatal mischance a cartridge had been left in one of the barrels, which went off, killing Mr. Marton immediately. The deceased, who was a very popular member of Surbiton society, leaves one son and three daughters.

DRUMMOND lit a cigarette thoughtfully.

"The Marton family don't appear to be in luck," he remarked. "Ted," he went on suddenly, "have you ever left a cartridge in a gun?"

"Can't say I have, old boy. Why?"

"'Well-known sportsman,'" quoted Drummond. "'Frequently shot over the week-end.' I wonder; I wonder very much. Confound it, you fellows, when you clean a gun you break it first, don't you? And when you break a gun you can see the blamed thing is loaded. Mark you, I'm not saying it wasn't an accident, but, once again, I wonder."

"You mean you think he shot himself?" said Darrell.

Drummond shrugged his shoulders.

"I can understand a gun being loaded and a man fooling about with it and by accident potting somebody else. I can understand a man climbing a fence, and through not holding his gun properly, or forgetting to put it at safety, getting peppered himself. But I find it deuced difficult to understand it in this case."

"And supposing you're right—what then?" said Jerningham curiously.

"Son in a condition of abject terror: father committing suicide. Surely there must be some connexion."

"Do you think the son knows what's happened?"

"Can't tell you. He said nothing about it to me. But in the account in the paper it specifies Mrs. Marton and her daughters only, so possibly he doesn't. Anyway, Ted, your question as to what to do to-night is now answered."

The other two stared at him.

"We pay a little visit to Glensham House. You say the new owner is not yet in residence?"

"As far as I know he isn't," said Jerningham, doubtfully.

"Splendid. And if by chance he is, we'll swear we've lost our way in the fog. Great Scott! chaps, think of the bare possibility of having stumbled on something. Admittedly it may prove a hopeless frost, but it would be nothing short of criminal to neglect such an opportunity."

"That's all right, old bean," said the other, "and no one likes a bit of fun and laughter better than I do. But don't forget I live in this bally locality, and what you're proposing is nothing more nor less than housebreaking."

"I know, Ted," Drummond grinned happily. "Maximum penalty, fourteen years. But we'll plead we're first offenders."

CHAPTER II.

GLENSHAM HOUSE was a large, rambling old place. It stood on low ground, surrounded by trees, about half way between the main road and the deadly Grimstone Mire. For generations it had belonged to the Glensham

family, but increasing taxation and death dues had so impoverished the present owner that he had been compelled to let.

Legends about the place abounded, and though some of them were undoubtedly founded on fact, many were merely local superstitions. For the house was an eerie one, set in eerie surroundings—the sort of place round which stories would be likely to grow—especially in the West Country.

But whatever the truth of some of the modern yarns—strange lights seen without human agency; footsteps when there was no one there to make them—certain of the older legends were historically true. The house was honeycombed with secret passages, and there was documentary proof that it had sheltered many of the Royalists during the Civil War with Cromwell.

For the last two years it had been empty, the tenants having left abruptly because, so they said, of the servant troubles. An old woman who lived in a cottage not far away had aired the place and kept it more or less clean. But there was a dark and unlived-in atmosphere about the house as it loomed up that made the man who was feeling his way cautiously forward along the edge of the drive shiver involuntarily and hesitate.

He was cold and hungry. For eight hours, like a phantom, he had been dodging other phantoms through the fog. Once he had butted straight into a woman, and she, after one glance at his clothes, had fled screaming.

Sheer chance had guided his footsteps to Glensham House. He knew the dangers of the moor in a fog. He knew that the risk he ran of being caught by a patrol of warders was a far lesser evil than a false step into one of those treacherous green bogs, from which there was no return. But he also knew that the main road was more dangerous than a side track, and when he had accidentally blundered off the smooth surface on to gravel he had followed the new direction blindly. Food and sleep were what he wanted. Then perhaps he would feel more capable of carrying on. Perhaps he might even do the warders yet, and make a clear get-away. Other clothes, of course—but that would have to wait. It was food first and foremost.

And now he stood peering at the house in front of him. He could see no trace of a light. Not a sound broke the silence save the melancholy drip, drip from the sodden branches above his head. And once again did Morris, the Sydenham murderer, shiver uncontrollably.

Like most men of low mentality, anything at all out of the ordinary frightened him. And having been born in a town, and lived all his life in crowds, the deadly stillness of this gloomy house almost terrified him. But hunger was stronger than fear. Where there was a house there was generally food, and to break into a place like this was child's play to him.

He took a few steps forward until he reached the wall. Then he began to circle slowly round the house in the hope of finding a window unlatched. To save himself trouble had always been his motto, and in case there should be anyone about it would minimize the risk of making a noise. But ten minutes later he was back at his starting point without having found a window open. He had passed three doors all bolted, and he had definitely decided in his own mind that the place was empty.

AND now the question arose as to what to do. If it was empty there would probably be no food. At the same time it was shelter—shelter from this foul fog. He would be able to sleep; and he *might* find something to eat. Perhaps the owners were only away for the night, in which case he might even get some other clothes. Anyway, it was worth while trying, and a couple of minutes later there came a sharp click, followed by the sound of a window being gently raised.

Inside the room he paused again and listened. Not a sound. Once a board cracked loudly outside the door, and he waited tensely. But there was no repetition, and after a while he relaxed.

He turned and softly shut and rebolted the window. Then he crept cautiously towards the door. There was a carpet on the floor, but except for that it struck him the room was very sparsely furnished. And hopes of food drooped again, only to be resurrected as he tiptoed into the hall. For close beside him in the darkness a clock was ticking. Another thing struck him also. The temperature in the hall seemed appreciably warmer than in the room he had just left.

He paused irresolutely. He was beginning to doubt after all if the house was empty. And then the clock began to strike. He counted the chimes—eight. Why, if there were people in the house, were they all upstairs or in bed so early?

The darkness was absolute, and if he had had any matches he would have chanced it and struck one. But matches are not supplied to convicts, and so he could only grope forward blindly and trust to luck that he would not kick anything over.

He wanted, if he could, to locate the kitchen, as being the most likely place to find food. And so, guessing it would be at the back of the house, he tried to move

in a straight line directly away from the room by which he had entered. And he had taken about ten paces when his foot struck something. All too late he knew what it was—one of those rickety little tables which are specially designed to upset on the slightest provocation. It fell with a crash, and a thing that sounded as if it must be a brass bowl went with it.

In the silence the noise was appalling, and the convict, with the sweat pouring off his forehead, stood motionless. He'd find out now sure enough if the house was empty or not. Was that somebody moving upstairs, or was it his imagination? He waited for what seemed an eternity. No further sound came. And at length his heart ceased to race, and with a sigh of relief he wiped his forehead with the back of his hand. Safe, so far.

ONCE more he went cautiously ahead, and a few moments later he bumped into a door. He tried the handle; it was unlocked, and he opened it. And at once he knew that he had struck lucky, for there came to his nostrils the unmistakable smell of food. Another thing, too—and this time there was no doubt at all about it—the room he was now in was much warmer. He groped his way forward, until his hands encountered a table—a solid, substantial table. Very gently he moved them over the surface. What was that? A cup and saucer, a loaf of bread, and last, but not least, a candle. And if there was a candle there might be matches.

He went on feeling with his fingers: a knife, a plate with meat on it, and—but that seemed too good to be true—a bottle with a screw stopper, a bottle of a shape he had only seen in his dreams for years, a bottle of beer. And then, when he had almost decided to begin to eat, he touched a box of matches.

For a while he hesitated. Was it safe? There was still no sound from outside and he decided to risk it. He wanted to gloat over that wonderful bottle. The next moment the candle illuminated the repast in front of him, and like a famished wolf the convict fell on it.

He tore the bread in hunks from the loaf, beautiful white bread, the taste of which he had almost forgotten. He crammed his mouth with beef. And finally he washed it down with great gulps of beer.

At last the immediate pangs were appeased and he began to think things over. The room he was in was apparently the servants' hall, and since the meal had obviously not been prepared for him there must be someone in the house. Then why had nothing happened when he upset the table in the hall?

After a while a possible solution dawned on him. The owners of the house were clearly away, and had left the house in charge of a caretaker, who had gone out and been unable to get back owing to the fog.

The point was, would he or she return that night? And even as he cogitated over it his throat turned dry and he froze into a rigid block of terror. A mirror was hanging on the wall in front of him, and in it he could see the reflection of the door behind his chair. And it was slowly opening. He watched it with distended eyes, unable to move or speak. What was coming in? And nothing came. As silently as it had opened it closed. Almost he might have imagined the whole thing.

But he knew he hadn't imagined it. He knew that the door had opened and shut. Who had done it? Who had peered in and seen him sitting there? He had heard no sound. He had seen nothing. But that silent watcher had seen him.

At last he forced himself to get up from his chair and turn round. The movement caused the candle to flicker, and the distorted shadows danced fantastically on the walls and ceiling. The only sound in the room was his heavy breathing as he stared fearfully at the door. Who was on the other side?

He took a step forward, another. And then with a sudden run he darted at it and flung it open. The passage was empty. There was no one there.

He rubbed his eyes dazedly. Then, going back into the room, he got the candle and, holding it above his head, once again examined the passage. No sign of anyone: no sound. The door which led into the hall was shut. So were two others that he could see. And suddenly a thought occurred to him that drove him back into the room almost frantic with fear. Supposing there had never been anyone there? Supposing it had been a ghost that had stood in the passage?

Almost gibbering with terror, he shut the door again and fumbled wildly for the key. It was not there. If there was one at all it was on the other side of the door. But not for a thousand pounds would Morris, brutal murderer though he might have been, have opened it again. All the horrors of the unknown were clutching at his heart. He would have positively welcomed the tramp of heavy boots in the hall, and the sight of a warder with a gun.

Keeping the table between him and the door, he crouched on the floor, staring with fascinated eyes at the handle. Was it going to turn again or not? And after a while

his imagination began to play him tricks. He thought it was moving, and he bit his hand to prevent himself crying out. And then it didn't. Nothing happened.

Suddenly he straightened up. For the moment the ghost was forgotten. A sound had come from above his head—the unmistakable sound of a footstep. It was repeated, and he stood there staring upwards, listening intently. No ghost about that, he reflected. Somebody was in the room above him, and by the heaviness of the tread it sounded like a man.

He leaned forward to blow out the candle. Then he paused, torn between two conflicting fears. If he left it burning it might be seen, but if he blew it out the room would be in darkness. And darkness with the thing outside in the passage was impossible to contemplate. If the door was going to open again he felt he must see it. And even as he hesitated there came a strange, half-strangled cry from overhead, followed by a heavy bump that shook the ceiling.

He began to tremble violently. Things were happening in this house that he could not understand. That noise upstairs—it wasn't normal. And now there were other sounds, for all the world like the flounderings of some huge fish on the floor above. Gradually they died away, and once again silence settled on the house.

After a while, as the silence continued, he grew a little calmer. He must decide what he was going to do. On one thing he was absolutely determined: clothes or no clothes, nothing would induce him to go upstairs. And the only point was whether he should go through the window now and out into the foggy night, or whether he dared to wait a few more hours. He opened the shutters, and found the point was settled for him: there were bars outside, and so that means of exit was cut out. And the bare idea of going through the hall until daylight came was out of the question.

He sat down once more in the chair by the table and tilted up the bottle of beer to see if by chance a drop remained. Then he spied a cupboard in the corner, and, crossing the room, he looked inside. And there, to his joyful amazement, he found five more. He greedily seized one, and turned back towards the table to get the glass. And the next moment the bottle fell from his nerveless fingers on the carpet. For the door had opened again.

HE stared at it, making hoarse little croaking noises in his throat. He was in such a position that he could not see into the passage. All he knew was that it was open wide enough to admit a human being, or whatever it was that was outside. And now it was opening wider still, and he cowered back with his arm over his eyes. In another second he felt he would yell, his reason would give. And then suddenly the tension snapped. He heard a voice speaking, and it was a woman's voice, though curiously deep and solemn.

"My poor man, do not be frightened. I am here to help you."

He lowered his arm. The door was now wide open. And framed in the entrance was a grey-haired woman dressed in black. She stood very still. Her features were dead white, her hands like those of a corpse. But for her eyes, that gleamed strangely from her mask-like face, she might have been a waxwork model.

(To be continued.)

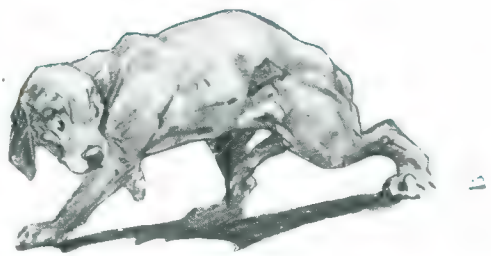
THE GO-GETTER

ON the usually unruffled brow of the Hon. Freddie Threepwood, as he paced the gardens of Blandings Castle, there was the slight but well-marked frown of one whose mind is not at rest. It was high summer and the gardens were at their loveliest, but he appeared to find no solace in their splendour. Calceolarias which would have drawn senile yips of ecstasy from his father, Lord Emsworth, left him cold. He eyed the lobelias with an unseeing stare, as if he were cutting an undesirable acquaintance in the paddock at Ascot.

What was troubling this young man was the continued sales-resistance of his Aunt Georgiana. Ever since his marriage to the only daughter of Donaldson's Dog-Biscuits ("Get Your Dog Thinking The Donaldson Way"), of Long Island City, New York, Freddie Threepwood had thrown himself heart and soul into the promotion of the firm's wares. And, sent home to England to look about for likely prospects, he had seen in Georgiana, Lady Alcester, a customer who approximated to the ideal. The owner of four Pekingese, two Poms, a Yorkshire terrier, five Sealyhams, a Borzoi, and an Airedale, she was a woman who stood for something in dog-loving circles. To secure her patronage would be a big thing for him. It would stamp him as a live wire and a go-getter. It would please his father-in-law hugely. And the proprietor of Donaldson's Dog-Joy was a man who, when even slightly pleased, had a habit of spraying five-thousand-dollar cheques like a geyser.

And so far, despite all his eloquence, callously oblivious of the ties of kinship and the obligations they involve, Lady Alcester had refused to sign on the dotted line, preferring to poison her menagerie with some degraded garbage called, if he recollected rightly, Peterson's Pup-Food.

A bitter snort escaped Freddie. It was still echoing through the gardens, when he



found that he was no longer alone. He had been joined by his Cousin Gertrude.

"What-ho!" said Freddie amiably. He was fond of Gertrude, and did not hold it against her that she had a mother who was incapable of spotting a good dog-biscuit when she saw one. Between him and Gertrude there had long existed a firm alliance. It was to him that Gertrude had turned for assistance when the family were trying to stop her getting engaged to good old Beefy Bingham; and he had supplied assistance in such good measure that the engagement was now an accepted fact.

"Freddie," said Gertrude, "may I borrow your car?"

"Certainly. Most decidedly. Going over to see old Beefers?"

"No," said Gertrude, and a closer observer than her cousin might have noted in her manner a touch of awkwardness. "Mr. Watkins wants me to drive him in to Shrewsbury."

"Oh? Well, carry on, as far as I'm concerned. You haven't seen your mother anywhere, have you?"

"I think she's sitting on the lawn."

"Ah! Is she? Right-ho. Thanks."

Freddie moved off in the direction indicated, and presently came in sight of his relative, seated as described. The Airedale was lying at her feet. One of the Pekes occupied her lap. And she was gazing into the middle distance in a preoccupied manner, as if she had a weight on her mind.

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By P. G. WODEHOUSE

Illustrated by TREYER EVANS

Nor would one who drew this inference from her demeanour have been mistaken. Lady Alcester was feeling disturbed.

A woman who stands *in loco parentis* to fourteen dogs must of necessity have her cares, but it was not the dumb friends that were worrying Lady Alcester now. What was troubling her was the disquieting behaviour of her daughter Gertrude.

Engaged to the Rev. Rupert Bingham, Gertrude seemed to her of late to have become infatuated with Orlo Watkins, the Crooning Tenor, one of those gifted young men whom Lady Constance Keeble, the châtelaine of Blandings, was so fond of inviting down for lengthy visits.

On the subject of the Rev. Rupert Bingham, Lady Alcester's views had recently undergone a complete change. In the beginning, the prospect of having him for a son-in-law had saddened and distressed her. Then, suddenly discovering that he was the nephew and heir of as opulent a shipping magnate as ever broke bread at the Adelphi Hotel, Liverpool, she had soared from the depths to the heights. She was now strongly pro-Bingham. She smiled upon him freely. Upon his appointment to the vacant Vicarage of Much Matchingham, the village nearest to Market Blandings, she had brought Gertrude to the Castle so that the young people should see one another frequently.

And, instead of seeing her betrothed frequently, Gertrude seemed to prefer to moon about with this Orlo Watkins, this Crooning Tenor. For days they had been inseparable.

Now, everybody knows what Crooning Tenors are. Dangerous devils. They sit at the piano and gaze into a girl's eyes and sing in a voice that sounds like gas escaping from a pipe about Love and the Moonlight and You ; and, before you know where you are, the girl has scrapped the deserving young clergyman with prospects to whom she is affianced and is off and away with a man whose only means of livelihood consist of intermittent engagements with the British Broadcasting Corporation.

If a mother is not entitled to shudder at a prospect like that, it would be interesting to know what she is entitled to shudder at.

Lady Alcester, then, proceeded to shudder, and was still shuddering when the drowsy summer peace was broken by a hideous uproar. The Peke and the Airedale had given tongue simultaneously, and, glancing up, Lady Alcester perceived her nephew Frederick approaching.

And what made her shudder again was the fact that in Freddie's eye she noted with concern the familiar go-getter gleam, the old dog-biscuit glitter.

However, as it had sometimes been her experience, when cornered by her nephew, that she could stem the flood by talking promptly on other subjects, she made a gallant effort to do so now :—

"Have you seen Gertrude, Freddie ?"

"Yes. She borrowed my car to go to Shrewsbury."

"Alone ?"

"No. Accompanied by Watkins. The yowler."

A further spasm shook Lady Alcester.

"Freddie," she said, "I'm worried."

"Worried ?"

"About Gertrude."

"No need to worry about Gertrude,"

said Freddie. "What you want to worry about is these dogs of yours. Notice how they barked at me? Nerves. They're a mass of nerves. And why? Improper feeding. As long as you mistakenly insist on giving them Peterson's Pup-Food—lacking, as it is, in many of the essential vitamins—so long will they continue to fly off the handle every time they see a human being on the horizon. Now, pursuant on what we were talking about this morning, Aunt Georgiana, there is a little demonstration I would like——"

"Can't you give her a hint, Freddie?"

"Who?"

"Gertrude."

"Yes, I suppose I could give her a hint. What about?"

"She is seeing far too much of this man Watkins."

"Well, so am I, for the matter of that. So is everybody who sees him more than once."

"She seems to have forgotten that she is engaged to Rupert Bingham."

"Rupert Bingham, did you say?" said Freddie with sudden animation. "I'll tell you something about Rupert Bingham. He has a dog named Bottles which has been fed from early youth on Donaldson's Dog-Joy, and I wish you could see him. Thanks to the bone-forming properties of Donaldson's Dog-Joy, he glows with health. A fine, upstanding dog, with eyes sparkling with health and both feet on the ground."

"Never mind about Rupert's dog!"

"You've got to mind about Rupert's dog. You can't afford to ignore him. He is a dog to be reckoned with. A dog that counts. And all through Donaldson's Dog-Joy."

"I don't want to talk about Donaldson's Dog-Joy."

"I do. I want to give you a demonstration. You may not know it, Aunt Georgiana, but over in America the way we advertise this product, so full of bone-forming vitamins, is as follows. We instruct our demonstrator to stand out in plain view before the many-headed, and, when the audience is of sufficient size, to take a biscuit and break off a piece and chew it. By this means we prove that Donaldson's Dog-Joy is so superbly wholesome as actually to be fit for human consumption. Our demonstrator not only eats the biscuit, but he enjoys it. He rolls it round his tongue. He chews it and mixes it with his saliva——"

"Freddie, please!"

"With his saliva," repeated Freddie firmly. "And so does the dog. He masticates the biscuit. He enjoys it. He becomes a bigger and better dog. I will now eat a Donaldson's Dog-Biscuit."

And before his aunt's nauseated gaze he proceeded to attempt this gruesome feat.

IT was an impressive demonstration, but it failed in one particular. To have rendered it perfect, he should not have choked. Want of experience caused the disaster. Long years of training go to the making of the seasoned demonstrators of Donaldson's Dog-Joy. They start in a small way with carpet-tacks and work up through the flat-irons and the patent breakfast cereals till they are ready for the big effort. Freddie was a novice. Endeavouring to roll the morsel round his tongue, he allowed it to escape into his windpipe.

The sensation of having swallowed a mixture of bricks and sawdust was succeeded by a long and painful coughing fit. And when at length the sufferer's eyes cleared, no human form met their gaze. Lady Alcester had disappeared.

However, it is a well-established fact that good men, like Donaldson's Dog-Biscuits, are hard to keep down. Some fifty minutes later, as the Rev. Rupert Bingham sat in his study at Matchingham Vicarage, the parlourmaid announced a visitor. The Hon. Freddie Threepwood limped in, looking shop-soiled.

"What-ho, Beefers," he said. "I just came to ask if I could borrow Bottles."

He went to where the animal lay on the hearthrug and prodded it civilly in the lower ribs. Bottles waved a long tail in brief acknowledgment. He was a fine dog, though of uncertain breed. His mother had been a popular local belle, and the question of his paternity was one that would have set a Genealogical College pursing its lips perplexedly.

"Oh, hullo, Freddie!" said the Rev. Rupert.

The young pastor of souls spoke in an absent voice. He was frowning. It is a singular fact—and one that just goes to show what sort of a world this is—that of the four foreheads introduced so far to the reader of this chronicle three have been corrugated with care. And, if girls had consciences, Gertrude's would have been corrugated, too—giving us a full hand.

"Take a chair," said the Rev. Rupert.

"I'll take a sofa," said Freddie, doing so. "Feeling a bit used up. I had to hoof it all the way over."

"What's happened to your car?"

"Gertrude took it to drive Watkins to Shrewsbury."

The Rev. Rupert sat for a while in thought. His face, which was large and red, had a drawn look. Even the massive body which had so nearly won him a Rowing

"The snake Watkins has stolen Gertrude from you," said Freddie.

Blue at Oxford gave the illusion of having shrunk. So marked was his distress that even Freddie noticed it.

"Something up, Beefers?" he inquired.

For answer, the Rev. Rupert Bingham extended a manlike hand which held a letter. It was written in a sprawling, girlish handwriting.

"Read that," he said.

"From Gertrude?"

"Yes. It came this morning. Well?"

Freddie completed his perusal and handed the document back. He was concerned.

"I think it's the bird," he said.

"So do I."

"It's long," said Freddie, "and it's rambling. It is full of stuff about Are we sure and Do we know our own minds and Wouldn't it be better, perhaps. But I think it is the bird."

"I can't understand it."

Freddie sat up.

"I can," he said. "Now I see what Aunt Georgiana was drooling about. Her fears were well-founded. The snake Watkins has stolen Gertrude from you."

"You think Gertrude's in love with Watkins?"

"I do. And I'll tell you why. He's a yowler, and girls always fall for yowlers. They have a glamour."

"I've never noticed Watkins's glamour. He has always struck me as a weed."

"Weed he may be, Beefers, but, none the less, he knows how to do his stuff. I don't know why it should be, but there is a certain type of tenor voice which acts on girls like catnip on a cat."

The Rev. Rupert breathed heavily.

"I see," he said.

"The whole trouble is, Beefers," proceeded Freddie, "that Watkins is romantic and you're not. Your best friend couldn't call you romantic. Solid worth, yes. Romance, no."

"So it doesn't seem as if there was much to be done about it?"

Freddie reflected.

"Couldn't you manage to show yourself in a romantic light?"

"How?"

"Well—stop a runaway horse."

"Where's the horse?"

"'M'yes," said Freddie. "That's by way of being the difficulty, isn't it?"

There was silence for some moments.

"Well, be that as it may," said Freddie, "can I borrow Bottles?"

"What for?"

"Purposes of demonstration. I wish to exhibit him to my Aunt Georgiana, so that she may see for herself what heights of robustness a dog can rise to when fed sedulously on Donaldson's Dog-Joy. I'm having a lot of trouble with that woman, Beefers. I try all the artifices which win to success in salesmanship, and they don't. But I have a feeling that if she could see Bottles and poke him in the ribs and note the firm, muscular flesh, she might drop. I'll take him along, may I?"

"All right."

"Thanks. And, in regard to your little trouble, I'll be giving it my best attention. You're looking in after dinner to-night?"

"I suppose so," said the Rev. Rupert moodily.

THE information that her impressionable daughter had gone off to roam the countryside in a two-seater car with the perilous Watkins had come as a grievous blow to Lady Alcester. As she sat on the terrace, an hour after Freddie had begun the weary homeward trek from Matchingham Vicarage, her heart was sorely laden.

The Airedale had wandered away upon some private ends, but the Peke lay slumbering in her lap. She envied it its calm detachment. To her the future looked black and the air seemed heavy with doom.

Only one thing mitigated her gloom. Her nephew Frederick had disappeared. Other prominent local pests were present, such as flies and gnats, but not Frederick. The grounds of Blandings Castle appeared to be quite free from him.

And then even this poor consolation was taken from the stricken woman. Limping a little, as if his shoes hurt him, the Hon. Freddie came round the corner of the shrubbery, headed in her direction. He was accompanied by something having the outward aspect of a dog.

"What-ho, Aunt Georgiana!"

"Well, Freddie?" sighed Lady Alcester.

The Peke, opening one eye, surveyed the young man, seemed to be debating within itself the advisability of barking, came apparently to the conclusion that it was too hot, and went to sleep again.

"This is Bottles," said Freddie.

"Who?"

"Bottles. The animal I touched on some little time back. Note the well-muscled frame."

"I never saw such a mongrel in my life."

"Kind hearts are more than coronets," said Freddie. "The point at issue is not this dog's pedigree, but his physique. Reared exclusively on a diet of Donaldson's Dog-Joy, he goes his way with his chin up, frank and fearless. I should like you to come along to the stables and watch him among the rats. It will give you some idea."

He would have spoken further, but at this point something occurred, as had happened during his previous sales-talk, to mar the effect of Freddie's oratory.

The dog Bottles, during this conversation, had been roaming to and fro in the inquisitive manner customary with dogs who find themselves in strange territory. He had sniffed at trees. He had rolled on the turf. Now, returning to the centre of things, he observed for the first time that on the lap of the woman seated in the chair there lay a peculiar something.

What it was Bottles did not know. It appeared to be alive. A keen desire came upon him to solve this mystery. To keep the records straight, he advanced to the chair, thrust an inquiring nose against the object, and inhaled sharply.

The next moment, to his intense surprise, it had gone off like a bomb, had sprung to

the ground, and was moving rapidly towards him.

Bottles did not hesitate. A rough-and-tumble with one of his peers he enjoyed. But this was different. He had never met a Pekingese before, and no one would have been more surprised than himself if he had been informed that this curious, fluffy thing was a dog. Himself, he regarded it as an act of God, and, thoroughly unnerved, he raced three times round the lawn and tried to climb a tree. Failing in this endeavour, he fitted his ample tail if possible more firmly into its groove and vanished.

The astonishment of the Hon. Freddie Threepwood was only equalled by his chagrin. Lady Alcester had begun now to express her opinion of the incident, and her sneers, her jeers, her unveiled innuendos were hard to bear. If, she said, the patrons of Donaldson's Dog-Joy allowed themselves to be chased off the map in this fashion by a Pekingese, she was glad she had never been weak enough to be persuaded to try it.

"It's lucky," said Lady Alcester, in her hard, scoffing way, "that Fan-Toy wasn't a rat. I suppose a rat would have given that mongrel of yours heart failure."

"Bottles," said Freddie, stiffly, "is particularly sound on rats. I think, in common fairness, you ought to step to the stables and give him a chance of showing himself in a true light."

"I have seen quite enough, thank you."

"You won't come to the stables and watch him dealing with rats?"

"I will not."

"In that case," said Freddie, sombrely, "there is nothing more to be said. I suppose I may as well take him back to the Vicarage."

"What Vicarage?"

'Matchingham Vicarage."

"Was that Rupert's dog?"

"Of course it was."

"Then have you seen Rupert?"

"Of course I have."

"Did you warn him? About Mr. Watkins?"

"It was too late to warn him. He had had a letter from Gertrude, giving him the raspberry."

"What?"

"Well, she said, Was he sure, and Did they know their own minds? but you can take it from me that it was tantamount to the raspberry. Returning, however, to the topic of Bottles, Aunt Georgiana, I think you ought to take into consideration the fact that, in his recent encounter with the above Peke, he was undergoing a totally new experience, and naturally did not appear at his best. I repeat once more that you should see him among the rats."

"Oh, Freddie!"

"Hullo!"

"How can you babble about this wretched dog when Gertrude's whole future is at stake. It is simply vital that she be cured of this dreadful infatuation——"

"Well, I'll have a word with her, if you like, but, if you ask me, I think the evil has spread too far. Watkins has yowled himself into her very soul. However, I'll do my best. Excuse me, Aunt Georgiana."

From a neighbouring bush the honest face of Bottles was protruding. He seemed to be seeking assurance that the All Clear had been blown.

IT was at the hour of the ante-dinner cocktail that Freddie found his first opportunity of having the promised word with Gertrude. Your true salesman and go-getter is never beaten, and a sudden and brilliant idea for accomplishing the conversion of his Aunt Georgiana had come to him as he brushed his hair. He descended to the drawing-room with a certain jauntiness, and was reminded by the sight of Gertrude of his mission. The girl was seated at the piano, playing dreamy chords.

"I say," said Freddie. "A word with you, young Gertrude. What is all this bilge I hear about you and Beefers!?"

The girl flushed.

"Have you seen Rupert?"

"I was closeted with him this afternoon. He told me all."

"Oh?"

"He's feeling pretty low."

"Oh?"

"Yes," said Freddie, "pretty low the poor old chap is feeling, and I don't blame him, with the girl he's engaged to rushing about the place getting infatuated with tenors. I never heard of such a thing, dash it. What do you see in this Watkins? Wherein lies his attraction? Certainly not in his ties. They're awful. And the same applies to his entire outfit. And, as if that were not enough, he wears short, but distinct, side-whiskers. You aren't going to tell me that you're seriously considering chucking a sterling egg like old Beefers in favour of a whiskered warbler?"

There was a pause.

"I'm not going to discuss it," said Gertrude. "It's nothing to do with you."

"Pardon me!" said Freddie. "Excuse me! If you will throw your mind back to the time when Beefers was conducting his wooing, you may remember that I was the fellow who worked the whole thing. But for my resource and ingenuity, you and the old bloke would never have got engaged. I regard myself, therefore, in the light of a guardian angel or something; and, as such,

am entitled to probe the matter to its depths. Of course," said Freddie, " I know exactly how you're feeling. I see where you have made your fatal bloomer. This Watkins has cast his glamorous spell about you, and you're looking on Beefers as a piece of unromantic cheese. But, mark this, girl——"

" I wish you wouldn't call me ' girl.' "

" Mark this, old prune," amended Freddie. " And mark it well. Beefers is tried, true, and trusted. A man to be relied on. Whereas Watkins, if I have read those whiskers aright, is the sort of fellow who will jolly well let you down in a crisis. And then, when it's too late, you'll come moaning to me, weeping salt tears, and saying, ' Ah, why did I not know in time ? ' And I shall reply to you, ' You unhappy fathead—— ' "

" Oh, go and sell your dog-biscuits, Freddie ! "

Gertrude resumed her playing. Her mouth was set in an obstinate line. Freddie eyed her with disapproval.

' It's some taint in the blood," he said. " Inherited from female parent. Like your mother, you are constitutionally incapable of seeing reason. Pig-headed, both of you. Sell my dog-biscuits, you say ? Ha ! As if I hadn't boosted them to Aunt Georgiana till my lips cracked. And with what result ? So far, none. But wait till to-night."

' It is to-night already."

' I mean, wait till later on to-night. Watch my little experiment."

" What little experiment ? "

" Ah ! "

" What do you mean, ' Ah ' ? "

" Just ' Ah ! ' " said Freddie.

The hour of the after-dinner coffee found Blandings Castle apparently an abode of peace. The superficial observer, peeping into the amber drawing-room through the French windows that led to the terrace, would have said that all was well with the inmates of this stately home of England Lord Emsworth, that dreamy peer, sat in a corner absorbed in a volume dealing with the treatment of pigs in sickness and in health. His sister, Lady Constance Keeble, was sewing. His other sister, Lady Alcester, was gazing at Gertrude. Gertrude was gazing at Orlo Watkins. And Orlo Watkins was gazing at the ceiling and singing in that crooning voice of his a song of roses.

The Hon. Freddie Threepwood was not present. And that fact alone, if one may go by the views of his father, Lord Emsworth,

"I have here, Aunt Georgiana," said Freddie, "a few simple rats. I shall be delighted to give a demonstration with the dog Bottles."

should have been enough to make a success of any party.

And yet beneath this surface of cosy peace troubled currents were running. Lady Alcester, gazing at Gertrude, found herself a prey to gloom. She did not like the way Gertrude was gazing at Orlo Watkins. Gertrude, for her part, as the result of her recent conversation with the Hon. Freddie, was experiencing twinges of remorse and doubt. Lady Constance was still ruffled from the effect of Lady Alcester's sisterly frankness that evening on the subject of the imbecility of hostesses who deliberately let Crooning Tenors loose in castles. And Lord Emsworth was in that state of peevish exasperation which comes to dreamy old gentlemen who, wishing to read of pigs, find their concentration impaired by voices singing of roses.

Only Orlo Watkins was happy. And presently he, too, was to join the ranks of gloom. For, just as he started to let himself go and handle this song as a song should be handled, there came from the other side of the door the sound of eager barking. A dog seemed to be without. And, apart from the fact that he disliked and feared all dogs, a tenor resents competition.

The next moment the door had opened, and the Hon. Freddie Threepwood appeared. He carried a small sack, and was accompanied by Bottles, the latter's manner noticeably lacking in repose.

On the face of the Hon. Freddie, as he advanced into the room, there was that set, grim expression which is always seen on the faces of those who are about to put their fortune to the test, to win or lose it all.

Many young men in his position, thwarted by an aunt who resolutely declined to amble across to the stables and watch a dog redeem himself among the rats, would have resigned themselves sullenly to defeat. But Freddie was made of finer stuff.

"Aunt Georgiana," he said, holding up the sack, at which Bottles was making agitated leaps, "you refused to come to the stables this afternoon to watch this Donaldson's Dog-Joy-fed animal in action, so you have left me no alternative but to play the fixture on your own ground."

Lord Emsworth, glancing up from his book, spoke with a father's stern coldness.

"Frederick, stop gibbering. And take that dog out of here."

Lady Constance, glancing up from her sewing, was equally unsympathetic.

"Frederick, if you are coming in, come in and sit down. And take that dog out of here."

Lady Alcester, glancing up from Gertrude, exhibited in even smaller degree the kindly cordiality which might have been expected from an aunt.

"Oh, do go away, Freddie! You're a perfect nuisance. And take that dog out of here."

The Hon. Freddie, with a noble look of disdain, ignored them all.

"I have here, Aunt Georgiana," he said, "a few simple rats. If you will kindly step out on to the terrace, I shall be delighted to give a demonstration which should, I think, convince even your stubborn mind."

The announcement was variously received by the various members of the company. Lady Alcester screamed. Lady Constance sprang for the bell. Lord Emsworth snorted. Orlo Watkins blenched and retired behind Gertrude. And Gertrude, watching him blench, seeing him retire, tightened her lips. A country-bred girl, she was on terms of easy familiarity with rats, and this evidence of alarm in one whom she had set on a pedestal disquieted her.

THE door opened and Beach, the butler, entered. He had come in pursuance of his regular duties to remove the coffee-cups; but, arriving, found other tasks assigned to him.

"Beach!" The voice was that of Lady Constance. "Take away those rats."

"Rats, m'lady?" said Beach. An abstemious man, he saw no rats.

"Take that sack away from Mr. Frederick!"

Beach understood. If he was surprised at the presence of the younger son of the house in the amber drawing-room with a sack of rats in his hand, he gave no indication of the fact. With a murmured apology, he secured the sack and started to withdraw. It was not, strictly, his place to carry rats, but a good butler is always ready to give and take. Only so can the amenities of a large country-house be preserved.

"And don't drop the dashed things," urged Lord Emsworth.

"Very good, m'lord."

The Hon. Freddie had flung himself into a chair, and was sitting with his chin cupped in his hands, a bleak look on his face. To an ardent young go-getter, these tyrannous actions in restraint of trade are hard to bear.

Lord Emsworth returned to his book.

Lady Constance returned to her sewing,

Lady Alcester returned to her thoughts.

At the piano, Orlo Watkins was endeavouring to justify the motives which had led him a few moments before to retire prudently behind Gertrude.

"I hate rats," he said. "They jar upon me."

"Oh?" said Gertrude.

"I'm not afraid of them, of course, but they give me the creeps."

"Oh?" said Gertrude.

There was an odd look in her eyes. Of what was she thinking, this idealistic girl? Was it of the evening, a few short weeks before, when, suddenly encountering a beastly bat in the gloaming, she had found in the Rev. Rupert Bingham a sturdy and intrepid protector? Was she picturing the Rev. Rupert as she had seen him then—gallant, fearless, cleaving the air with long sweeps of his clerical hat, encouraging her the while with word and gesture?

Apparently so, for a moment later she spoke.

"How are you on bats?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"Are you afraid of bats?"

"I don't like bats," admitted Orlo Watkins.

Then, dismissing the subject, he reseated himself at the piano and sang of June and the scent of unseen flowers.

Of all the little group in the amber drawing-room, only one member has now been left unaccounted for.

An animal of slow thought-processes, the dog Bottles had not at first observed what was happening to the sack. At the moment of its transference from the custody of Freddie to that of Beach, he had been engaged in sniffing at the leg of a chair. It was only as the door began to close that he became aware of the bereavement that threatened him. He bounded forward with a passionate cry, but it was too late. He found himself faced by unyielding wood. And when he started to scratch vehemently on this wood, a sharp pain assailed him and he became aware that a book on the treatment of pigs in sickness and in health, superbly aimed, had struck him in the small of the back. Then, for a space, he, like the Hon. Freddie Threepwood, his social sponsor, sat down and mourned.

"Take that beastly, blasted, infernal dog out of here," cried Lord Emsworth, still speaking with a father's cordiality.

Freddie rose listlessly.

"It's old Beefers's dog," he said. "Beefers will be here at any moment. We can hand the whole conduct of the affair over to him."

Gertrude started.

"Is Rupert coming here to-night?"

"Said he would," responded Freddie,

"Rupert!" cried Gertrude, and gazing at him she was reminded of the heroes of old.

and passed from the scene. He had had sufficient of his flesh and blood and was indisposed to linger. It was his intention to pop down to Market Blandings in his two-seater, soothe his wounded sensibilities, so far as they were capable of being soothed, with a visit to the local motion-picture house, look in at the Emsworth Arms for a spot of beer, and then home to bed, to forget.

Gertrude had fallen into a reverie. Her fair young face was overcast. A feeling of embarrassment had come upon her. When she had written that letter and posted it on the previous night, she had not foreseen that the Rev. Rupert would be calling so soon.

"I didn't know Rupert was coming to-night," she said.

"Oh, yes," said Lady Alcester, brightly. "Like a lingering tune, my whole life through, 'twill haunt me for-EV-ah, that night in June with you-oo," sang Orlo Watkins.

And Gertrude, looking at him, was aware for the first time of a curious sensation of not being completely in harmony with this young whiskered man. She wished he would stop singing. He prevented her thinking.

Bottles, meanwhile, had resumed his explorations. Dogs are philosophers. They soon forget. They do not waste time regretting the might-have-beens. Adjusting himself with composure to the changed conditions, Bottles moved to and fro in a spirit of affable inquiry. He looked at Lord Emsworth, considered the idea of seeing how he smelt, thought better of it, and advanced towards the French windows. Something was rustling in the bushes outside, and it seemed to him that this might as well be looked into before he went and breathed on Lady Constance's leg.

He had almost reached his objective, when Lady Alcester's Airedale, who had absented himself from the room some time before in order to do a bit of bone-burying, came bustling in, ready, his business completed, to resume the social whirl.

Seeing Bottles, he stopped abruptly.

Seeing him, Bottles stopped abruptly.

Both then began a slow and cautious forward movement, of a crablike kind. Arriving at close quarters, they stopped again. Their nostrils twitched a little. They rolled their eyes. And to the ears of those present there came, faintly at first, a low, throaty sound, like the far-off gargling of an octogenarian with bronchial trouble.

This rose to a sudden crescendo. And the next moment hostilities had begun.

IN underrating Bottles's qualities and scoffing at him as a fighting force, Lady Alcester had made an error. Capable though he was of pusillanimity in the presence of female Pekingese, there was nothing of the weakling about this sterling animal. He had cleaned up every dog in Much Matchingham and was spoken of on all sides—from the Blue Boar in the High Street to the distant Cow and Caterpillar on the Shrewsbury Road—as an ornament to the Vicarage and a credit to his master's cloth.

On the present occasion, moreover, he was strengthened by the fact that he felt he had right on his side. In spite of a certain coldness on the part of the Castle circle and a soreness about the ribs, where the book on pigs and their treatment had found its billet, there seems to be no doubt that Bottles had by this time become thoroughly convinced that this drawing-room was his official home. And, feeling that all these delightful people were relying on him to look after their interests and keep alien and subversive influences at a distance, he advanced with a bright willingness to the task of ejecting this intruder.

Nor was the Airedale disposed to hold back. He, too, was no stranger to the ring. In Hyde Park, where, when at his London residence, he took his daily airing, he had met all comers and acquitted himself well. Dogs from Mayfair, dogs from Bayswater, dogs from as far afield as the Brompton Road and West Kensington had had experience of the stuff of which he was made. He, also, felt that he had right on his side. Bottles reminded him a little of an animal from Pont Street, over which he had once obtained a decision on the banks of the Serpentine; and he joined battle with an easy confidence.

The reactions of a country-house party to an after-dinner dog-fight in the drawing-room always vary considerably according to the individual natures of its members. Lady Alcester, whose long association with the species had made her a sort of honorary dog herself, remained tranquil. She surveyed the proceedings with unruffled equanimity. Her chief emotion was one of surprise at the fact that Bottles was unquestionably getting the better of the exchanges. She liked his footwork. Impressed, she was obliged to admit that, if this was the sort of battler it turned out, there must be something in Donaldson's Dog-Joy, after all.

The rest of the audience were unable to imitate her nonchalance. The two principals were giving that odd illusion, customary on these occasions, of being all over the place at the same time: and the demeanour of those in the ringside seats was frankly

alarmed. Lady Constance had backed against the wall, from which position she threw a futile cushion. Lord Emsworth, in his corner, was hunting feebly for ammunition and wishing that he had not dropped the pince-nez, without which he was no sort of use in a crisis.

And Gertrude? Gertrude was staring at Orlo Watkins, who, with a resource and presence of mind unusual in one so young, had just climbed on top of a high cabinet containing china.

His feet were on a level with her eyes, and she saw that they were feet of clay.

And it was at this moment, when a girl stood face to face with her soul, that the door opened.

"Mr. Bingham," announced Beach.

Men of the physique of the Rev. Rupert Bingham are not, as a rule, quick thinkers. From earliest youth the Rev. Rupert had run to brawn rather than brain. But even the dullest-witted could have told, on crossing that threshold, that there was a dog-fight going on. Beefy Bingham saw it in a flash, and he acted promptly.

There are numerous methods of stopping these painful affairs. Some advocate squirting water, others prefer to sprinkle pepper. Good results may be obtained, so one school of thought claims, by holding a lighted match under the nearest nose. Beefy Bingham was impatient of these subtleties.

To Beefy, all this was old stuff. Ever since he had been given his cure of souls, his whole time, it sometimes seemed to him, had been spent in hauling Bottles away from the throats of the dogs of his little flock. Experience had given him a technique. He placed one massive hand on the neck of the Airedale, the other on the neck of Bottles, and pulled. There was a rending sound, and they came apart.

"Rupert!" cried Gertrude.

Gazing at him, she was reminded of the heroes of old. And few could have denied that he made a strangely impressive figure, this large young man, standing there with bulging eyes and a gyrating dog in each hand. He looked like a statue of Right triumphing over Wrong. You couldn't place it exactly, because it was so long since you had read the book, but he reminded you of something out of "Pilgrim's Progress."

So, at least, thought Gertrude. To Gertrude it was as if the scales had fallen from her eyes and she had wakened from some fevered dream. Could it be she, she was asking herself, who had turned from this noble youth and strayed towards one who, though on the evidence he seemed to have a future before him as an Alpine climber, was otherwise so contemptible?

"Rupert!" said Gertrude.

Beefy Bingham had now completed his masterly campaign. He had thrown Bottles out of the window and shut it behind him. He had dropped the Airedale to the carpet, where it now sat, licking itself in a ruminative way. He had produced a handkerchief and was passing it over his vermilion brow.

"Oh, Rupert!" said Gertrude, and flung herself into his arms.

The Rev. Rupert said nothing. On such occasions your knowledgeable vicar does not waste words.

Nor did Orlo Watkins speak. He had melted away. Perhaps, perched on his eyry, he had seen in Gertrude's eyes the look which, when seen in the eyes of a girl by an interested party, automatically induces the latter to go to his room and start packing in readiness for the telegram which he will receive on the morrow, summoning him back to London on urgent business. At any rate, he had melted.

IT was late that night when the Hon. Freddie Threepwood returned to the home of his fathers. Moodily undressing, he was surprised to hear a knock on the door.

His Aunt Georgiana entered. On her face was the unmistakable look of a mother whose daughter has seen the light and will shortly be marrying a deserving young clergyman with a bachelor uncle high up in the shipping business.

"Freddie," said Lady Alcester, "you know that stuff you're always babbling about."

"Donaldson's Dog-Joy," said Freddie. "It may be obtained either in the small (or one-and-threepenny) packets or in the half-crown (or large) size. A guarantee goes with each purchase. Unique in its health-giving properties——"

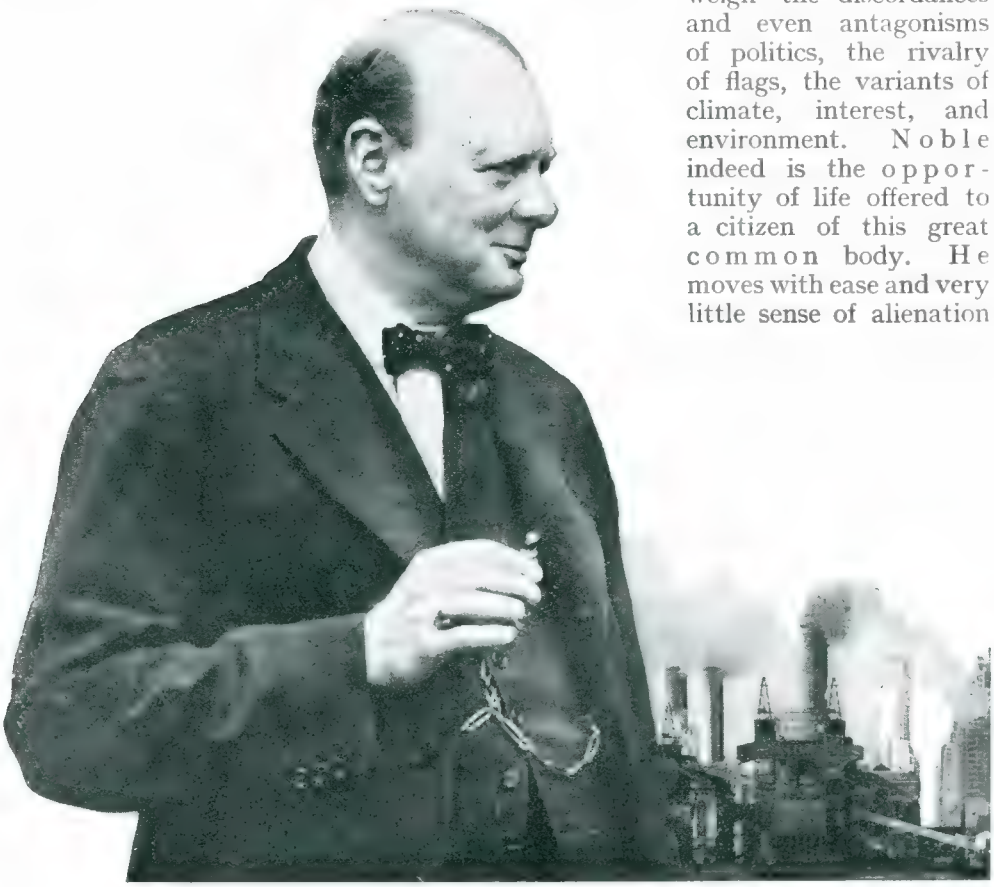
"I'll take two tons to start with," said Lady Alcester.

THE AMERICAN

IT is surely an elevated prospect which opens to those who are born into the English-speaking world. Spread wide around the globe and in possession of many of its fairest regions and main resources are more than one hundred and fifty millions of men and women speaking the same language, sprung in an overwhelming degree from a single origin, nursed by the same Common Law, and nourished and inspired by the same literature.

Such a vast community, abounding in wealth, power, and progress and enjoying liberal and democratic institutions and representative government, constitutes incomparably the largest and most harmonious grouping of the human race which has appeared since the zenith of the Roman Empire.

Although riven by the mischances of history and sundered into two branches, their joint inheritance of law and letters, the crimson thread of kinship, the similarity of their institutions, far outweigh the discordances and even antagonisms of politics, the rivalry of flags, the variants of climate, interest, and environment. Noble indeed is the opportunity of life offered to a citizen of this great common body. He moves with ease and very little sense of alienation



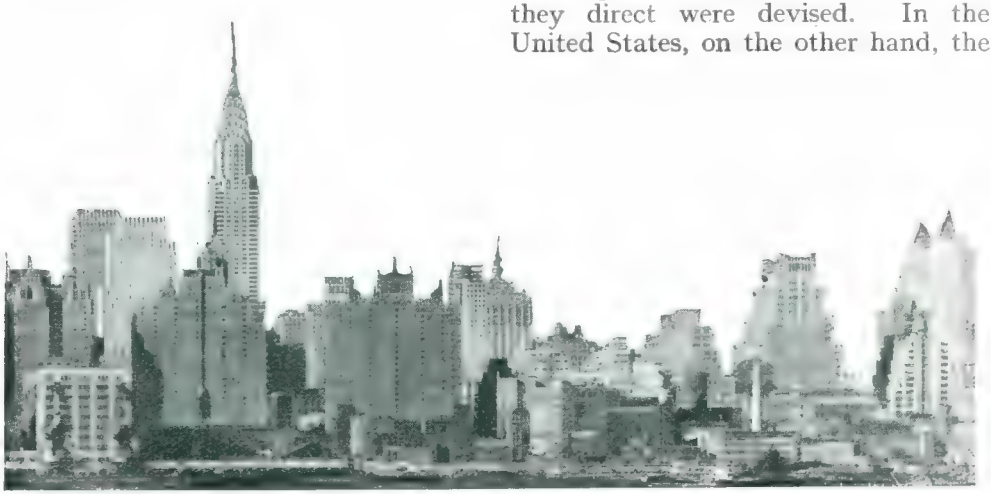
MIND AND OURS

By The Right Hon. WINSTON CHURCHILL P.C.

across enormous distances, and, unpacking his suitcase at a thousand centres of industry and culture, finds himself very speedily almost at home. In dwelling, therefore, upon the differences which time, events, and climate have wrought in the mentality of the various branches of the English-speaking world, it is above all things important to remember that these divergences are far less in volume and importance than the ties of union, of homogeneity.

The social life of the United States is built around business. In Europe business is a new-comer in society. The numerous aristocracies, overthrown but still influential, the ancient landed families, the hierarchies of the Army, the Navy, Diplomacy, the Law, and the Church, frame and largely fill the old-world picture.

Successful business men in Europe find a society ready-made for them. They are welcomed to circles which, especially in England, existed many years before their fortunes were made or the processes and machinery which they direct were devised. In the United States, on the other hand, the



struggle to subdue and utilize a continent has taken the place of dynastic, religious, and class controversies. It has absorbed the life of the American people. Everything else falls into a somewhat remote background; and business, commerce, money-making, in all their forms, occupy the centre of the stage. Business dominates the scene and itself gives the reception to which the leaders and members of the services and the professions are cordially invited.

By "society" I do not, of course, mean the gay world of fashion and amusement. In America, as in other countries, that is no more than an adjunct and a diversion. The society which guides and governs the United States is based not on play, but on an intense work which takes from its votaries a first charge on all their thought and energy. From the innumerable universities all their young men go into business as a matter of course. Business is to them the means of earning their living, of making money, of making a fortune; but it is much more than that: it is that career of interest, ambition, and possibly even glory, which in the older world is afforded by the learned professions and State services, military and civilian. A young American, wishing to play a worthy part in the control of affairs, directs himself instinctively towards the managing of factories, railroads, stores, banks, or any other of the thousand and one varieties of American business life.

Practically all the prizes of American life are to be gained in business. There, too, is the main path of useful service to the nation. Nearly all that is best

Crowds of anxious speculators on the steps of the Sub-Treasury in Wall Street, opposite the Stock Exchange, awaiting latest developments during the great stock market collapse at the end of 1929.

and most active in the manhood and ability of the United States goes into business with the same sense of serving the country as a young Prussian before the War entered the Army, or as a son of a noble house in England in former times sought to represent a family borough in the House of Commons. The leading men of every State are all in business. Their businesses are interlaced; they compete, they collide, they overlap. A continued struggle proceeds, but under rules which, though unwritten, are getting stronger every year.

American industry is greatly the gainer from its power to attract practically all the vital elements in the nation. It is the gainer, also, in an increasing degree, from the intimate combination in every stage between business and social life.

The financial centre of the U.S.A., Wall Street, New York, showing on the right the steps of the Sub-Treasury, and on the left, the new addition to the Stock Exchange. In the distance is the famous Trinity Church in Broadway.

For the leaders of business are also the leaders of society. They are gregarious; they band themselves together in groups, in clubs, in organizations. They do not only work together, they play together. They develop a strong corporate life, carrying with it a continual rising standard of discipline and behaviour. In every State and city they and their families are the nucleus of the local life; and in New York, where to a very large extent everything takes place on a super-scale, the leading business men are the leading figures of the whole nation. There has developed a confraternity the members of which help one another and stand together, and certainly have a far higher sense of comradeship and association than exists in business circles in England.

Very often it is at the golf club, or the country club, or across a private dinner table that the foundations of the largest transactions are laid. It is very important, therefore, in American business circles, to be a member of the

club or to be a welcome guest at the dinner; to be popular, trusted, and thought a genial companion and a good sportsman.

Of course, no convention prevents anyone entering and succeeding in business, if he has the qualities and the luck for making a fortune. It is done every day. New figures armed with fiercely-gathered wealth advance resolutely. They require no aid. Liked or disliked, they can stand on their own feet and make their way. It is a free country, they need not bow the knee to any social clique. "No, *sir*." Yet it would be very nice to be elected to the golf club, and to be accepted into the social circles; and it would also be very helpful, and never more helpful than in times of crisis and trouble.

These subtle influences invest the business life of the United States with a quality of strength and order which it formerly lacked. They are healthy and far-reaching. They are creating a new standard of values among successful men. It is good to have a great fortune; but there is more distinction in having a fine business and in managing it well. Wealth ceases to be the aim; it becomes the means, agreeable, indispensable, but yet only the means. Freedom of action and a sense of close contact with the practical, the elating force of large propositions—all these are the elements of an interesting life. These colossal modern businesses offer a man in many ways more scope and power than he could find in a Cabinet office, or at the head of a squadron of the Fleet or a division of the Army. The prospect is no less attractive because he may become a millionaire in the process.

In all concerned with production the American displays pre-eminent qualities. Conditions in America have favoured and fostered enterprises upon the largest scale. The American business mind turns naturally, instinctively, to bigness and boldness. In Europe, many of the important manufacturing firms have grown up over generations from small beginnings, and the works as they stand to-day represent the makeshift contributions of many years.

On the other hand, American development has had a clear field. To plan the "lay-out" of businesses upon a gigantic scale, to sweep away ruthlessly all encumbrances of the past, and to crush out all rivals or to merge with them are accepted as obvious ideals. The enormous plants make no compromise with the obsolete or the inefficient in any form.

Time—even in that land of hurry—is not grudged in preparation. Indeed, so vast were the preparations and establishments set on foot on both sides of the Atlantic for the maintenance and supply of the American Army, that the War was over before they had really begun to function, and, according to General Pershing, hardly a single American-made cannon fired an American shell at the enemy. Still, if the War had lasted into 1919, the results of these tremendous preparations would have been irresistible.

A MOST suggestive and illuminating book, "The American Omen," has extolled the industrial methods of the United States. In an amusing passage, pre-War Russian and American methods are contrasted. When a horse dies in Moscow, a single Russian arrives with a high, narrow cart and a long pole, and, by laying the cart on its side and using the wheel as a kind of windlass and the pole as a lever, single-handed, after long toil and with the utmost ingenuity, little by little manœuvres the carcass into the cart.

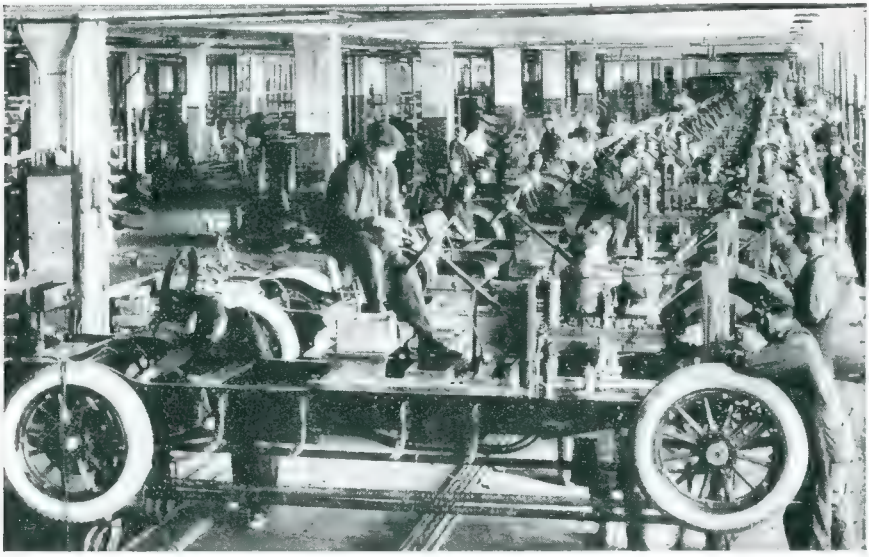
An American watching this performance would not, we are told, be at all impressed by this cleverness in overcoming difficulties. He would not accept the difficulties, but would seek to remove them in the first instance. He would not combat the fact that

it is very hard for one man to move a heavy horse; he would change the fact. "Specifically, he thinks of a wagon built for the purpose, low-swung on bent axles with proper tackle attached. Having imagined the special wagon, he asks himself if it would pay. Perhaps not; such a wagon would not be right for general purposes also. Therefore, the special wagon called for an organized special activity. With two or three of them one might remove all the dead horses in Moscow. Then it would pay." This instance is typical, and illustrates an admirable mental characteristic.

But what business has gained, by this concentration of American ability and quality upon itself, has been very largely at the expense of politics, and of the professions and martial services. Except in times of war, the United States military or naval man occupies only a very modest position in the public eye or social world. Politics are frankly despised and lamentably neglected as a life-long vocation by the flower of American manhood.

In England, at any rate, the man of independent means and ability who devotes his whole life to Parliament and public affairs, forswearing the opportunities of gathering wealth and seeking only, by serving the State, to rule events, is still regarded as on a higher plane than the prosperous and successful founder of a great business. In the moral hierarchy of our society he is treated as a superior.

It is, or was until recently—for things are changing—quite the contrary in the United States. Politics, dominated by the machine, have produced a caste of professional politicians, beneath whose tough sway few illusions thrive. Aspiring, ardent youth is repulsed from political life, and the aristocracy of business finds ways of solving its political problems other than by personal participation. In the result, the foreigner sees little to admire in the political life of the United



The final assembly line in a big American motor-car factory in which the gradually growing cars are carried on an endless moving chain from one group of mechanics to the next, each man contributing his particular detail to car after car as they pass.

States, except its immense mechanical stability.

The Constitution grips the American people with a strong, unyielding hand. Public opinion, so powerful in England, plays but little part in the government of the United States. Presidents, senates, congresses, State legislatures, public officers of all kinds, sustained and erected by the party machine and working for fixed terms, are not to be influenced by the day-to-day emotions of democracy or its Press. At election time, the strong outbursts of popular feelings are all skilfully canalized and utilized. The forces are enormous; but the men in charge know how to bridle and guide them.

The average Englishman, indignant at some scandal or ill-usage, feels he can put the matter right. The average American feels quite sure that he cannot. Public opinion and the sensitive flexibility of our Parliamentary institutions will very quickly sweep away in England an unpopular law. The American resigns himself to put up with it or evade it.

The statute books (both Federal and State) are crowded with laws which have fallen into what is euphemistically called "innocuous desuetude." Politics are accepted like the weather: they go on; one must make the best of them; life has to be lived; work has to be done; and there are so many other more interesting, jolly, and profitable affairs to attend to.

A certain optimistic fatalism fortifies and consoles the American citizen. He feels his country is strong enough, and that its vital force is buoyant enough, to survive the worst that politics can do. It may be that in following democracy and universal suffrage the old controls of English politics will, in their turn, be destroyed. Politics will no longer be an essential part of the life of the country, but merely a kind of continuous annoyance emanating from some detested organization which the intelligent or philosophical citizen learns by bitter experience how to mitigate or endure. Under the mask of democratic forms, great nations habituate themselves to arbitrary rule.

HAVING slipped into Prohibition unawares, America is unable to escape from its deadly embrace. The law cannot be altered, it appears. Therefore, it must be broken or evaded; and broken and evaded it has been on a scale without example in the history of self-respecting communities. But this great evil of almost universal law-breaking has bred still more deadly diseases. An inclined plane slopes unbrokenly from the senator or magnate sipping his glass of smuggled wine in Washington or New York, through layers of diminishing respectability, until the frontiers of murderous crime and blackest villainy are reached.

Here again the scale is gigantic. The worst types of European criminality find themselves banded together in formidable organizations and commanding enormous wealth. Back and up from this terrible underworld rise the ever-lengthening tentacles of graft and corruption. An attempt to interfere improperly with the rights and discretion of the citizen has carried the Legislature far beyond the bounds of public opinion, and the consequences, expanded and reacting from year to year, constitute a hideous disaster to American civilization. We simply cannot imagine either such a cause or such consequences arising in England.

But after all, the first characteristic of the American people is their happiness. The visitor feels himself in the presence of a race with a keen zest for life, a sure confidence in the future, and much enjoyment of things as they are. The American is more highly strung than the northern European; and in most cases this does not seem to lead to pessimism or a morbid condition. The impression of

happiness is common to all classes: the people in the streets, in the shops, in the hotels; the liftmen, the bell-hop, the telephone operator, all are gay.

No doubt there is a material basis for this. The purchasing power of the average wages of an American labourer is at least twice as much as that of his English equal, and the members of the other income strata are probably superior in the same proportions. A double income for a wage-earner means more than twice the amount of amenities and enjoyment. The necessities of life are a constant which has to be deducted in both cases. The resulting margin of the larger income offers possibilities, not twice, but probably many times as great.

The old orthodox tenet of European civilization that "money does not bring happiness," is probably only a modern adaptation of Æsop's fable of the "Fox and the Grapes." Vast wealth does not bring happiness; but that small margin of spare money after necessities have been provided for constitutes in America the structure of what is definitely a larger life.

In the United States this larger life—or, rather, larger share of life in its natural and rightful balance—is enjoyed by an incomparably greater number than in any other country in the world. "England," said Disraeli, speaking of the early years of the nineteenth century and of long centuries before it, "was for the few, and for the very few." Now we have broadened out. Millions of our people now participate in a wide and eventful form of existence.

In the United States the same classes are counted in scores of millions. Life there is organized not for the few, nor for the millions, but for the scores of millions. Culture, amusement, and reasonable ambitions are provided wholesale by mass production. Culture, indeed, is a standardized article; and the population is almost conscript for university education. Here is the great achievement and marvellous phenomenon of the Great Republic—namely, the vast numbers participating in the full life.

BECAUSE the overwhelming majority of Americans enjoy conditions which are not only incomparably fortunate according to European standards, opinion is hard upon failure in all its forms. The mortal sin in the American decalogue is failure; all others are venial. If a man is a failure, the American presumption is that he has himself to blame. There are no vast submerged classes in whose behalf it can be pleaded that they have never had a chance. The great majority of the United States citizens feel that those who have not been able to come up to the general standard have faults or weaknesses for which they deserve to suffer.

There is little place for pity in the schemes of the Great Republic for the failures, for the impoverished or the worn-out. A great chance was offered; it was fair and free; it was offered to all; and if these pitiful ones have not taken it, so much the worse for them. All this is the philosophy of an expanding prosperity and widely-diffused success.

But now, swiftly, suddenly, unexpectedly, though for only a spell, misfortune, contraction, disorganization, stagnation, unemployment have swept down upon the community which two years ago had reached the highest level of material well-being yet achieved by such great numbers of folk in this world. American optimism and complacency have been violently shaken. Millions of unemployed workpeople and clerks present themselves in the great cities. There are bread queues, there are riots, there are even what are called "Socialists," a terrible symptom! And in remote country districts, as well as in the

back streets of stately cities, actual famine lays its bony hand upon individuals. This is, of course, only a passing phase from which the United States will emerge strengthened or more prosperous. It is on the rule and not on the exception that we must dwell.

Next to happiness a marked heartiness characterizes the American people. This word, when used in its English meaning, is almost a term of opprobrium: but in America it means a genuine flow of friendly feeling. The traveller is welcomed with gusts of friendliness, expansive gestures, and every appearance of joy. Hospitality and every form of kindness are thrust upon him. To this the average British visitor makes but an inadequate return. He behaves with traditional reserve and frigidity, and too often seems to lack the technique for reciprocating the welcome he receives.

There is no doubt that the English people are chary of allowing the feeling of friendliness to take root quickly, and are diffident in its outward expression. They embody a complicated mass of sensitiveness and susceptibilities, acquired or inherited, which are due to a long succession of troubles and frustration. They are the children of a race for whom life has for many generations been less easy than the life of the last few generations in America. Since individual frustration and failure have been more common in his experience, the Englishman carries about scars and wounds which are liable to injury at the hands of another. In consequence, he is unwilling to come close to others in terms of friendliness until he has tried and tested them by various means, proved that they are unlikely to give offence in a thousand possible ways, and are capable of the many forms of give and take, self-restraint, and understanding which friendship between such sensitive people must involve.

American susceptibilities are of a

Food queues have of recent months been a prominent feature of American life. Above is seen a long line of unemployed waiting for the free distribution of soup, coffee, and doughnuts.

Part of a huge crowd of unemployed at St. Louis, Missouri, waiting with baskets for free gifts of surplus perishable food.

more childlike and superficial character. The American is more confident and free from the scars of many battles. He is less afraid of the stranger, and is capable of an immediate sensation of genuine friendliness. Affability and amiability come easier to all classes of Americans than to their corresponding types in England.

A third characteristic of the American is his earnestness. He dwells in an atmosphere of intense earnestness and seriousness about all matters of practical concern or general interest. The American prides himself on his sense of humour, but to a transatlantic visitor his earnestness is the predominating feature. We, with our experience that the goal, whatever it be, can only be attained by wary, roundabout, and imperfect methods, are reluctant to indulge in hopes of quick success. With us, the cautious and plodding attitude is appropriate. A super-intense or earnest Englishman always seems to have a flavour of hysteria or the ridiculous about him. Jests and irony run through our serious discussions, and even the gravest situation in England breeds its joke. Cynicism and ridicule have their part to play in the gamut of the human mind. Few are the public men in England who do not, from time to time, indulge such moods.

These attitudes do not represent an ultimate cynicism. They arise from a more just appreciation of the degree of enthusiasm which the situation allows. Since failure is more common in the Old World, its inhabitants have come to relish painful and cynical observations upon the difference between the ideal and the actual, or about the failure of our neighbours or ourselves to live up to our own standards.

Such an attitude is shocking to the average American. Any flavour of levity applied to the grave affairs of life is obnoxious to his mind. He feels it to be decadent and dangerous. He regards it in his visitor (although too polite to say so) as a sign of the corruption of the Old World.

These earnest enthusiasms and aspirations lead very readily to a habit of platitudinizing. A friend of mine who made prolonged travel with a learned delegation through the United States, far from the fashionable circles of New York, says: "They never seem to tire of enunciating the simplest truths with all the solemnity at their command. This may partly have been due to the belief that the platitudes were good for us; and to their habit of acting quickly on what they believe to be sound. Perceiving that we, in many of the matters which were discussed, had failed to give effect to the elementary principles of the subject, they assumed it was because we were ignorant of those principles. It was really because we knew that circumstances did not, indeed, allow the ideal solution, and that, therefore, old sentiments, prejudices, and tradition favouring less sound principles must not be too hastily discarded for the sake of unattainable ideals. Such an attitude was distressing to our American friends. Once they have decided upon the best way of doing something, they proceed to try to do it. They could not conceive that any failure to act on the best principles was due to anything except ignorance of those principles —or worse. Hence the well-meaning platitudes."

There is no doubt that the American love of platitude has a deeper root than this. It arises from their national situation. They have had great good fortune and success. They have a tremendous and obvious task to perform. Their mixture of many races —Poles, Italians, Serbs, and other southern European emigrants—has not yet been assimilated. The hundred-per-cent. Americans have before them a serious problem of welding the nation together. For this the platitude is a powerful instrument. Everyone must be made to think the same things in certain important matters. Everyone must sing the chorus. Everyone must learn the slogans. Everyone must know the drill-book by heart. United sentiment must overcome diversity of racial origin. About certain important matters all must be taught to say the same thing, and to repeat it until it becomes tradition itself.

TO sum up this brief examination of a tremendous subject, the Americans in their millions are a frailer race with a lighter structure than their British compeers. They are less indurated by disappointment; they have more hopes and more illusions; they swing more rapidly between the poles of joy and sorrow; and the poles are wider apart. They suffer more acutely both physical and moral pain. The texture of their national life is newly wrought; they have all the advantages and defects of newness and modernity. Their mighty finance, which two years ago soared so triumphantly to the skies, has now for the moment, with as little reason, crashed to the pavement.

These excesses both of elation and depression would have been avoided in England. Tough, buttoned-up, with much reserve and with many latent resources, the Englishman trudges forward, bearing his burden along the stony, uphill road, which we are taught will have no ending. He will not fail. Even if the first prizes of the future should fall to the United States, the Englishman will still remain a vast enduring force for virility, sanity, and goodwill. But it is in the combination across the Atlantic of these diversified minds, and in the union of these complementary virtues and resources, that the brightest promise of the future dwells.

A PRESENT FOR A GOOD GIRL

By

HORACE ANNESLEY VACHELL

Illustrated by
WILTON WILLIAMS

PROBABLY Poltino, or Poltergeist, had a hand in it. The little devil ever indulges his impish humour at the expense of absent-minded beggars, leaving them to extricate themselves, if they can, from disconcerting situations.

Mr. Spool, staid, middle-aged, portly, somewhat pernicketty, an old bachelor and altogether conventional, was sitting on a bench in Peter Pan Land, when realization of the prank played by Poltino came to him; and he fancied, albeit not a too fanciful man, that he heard an elfin peal of laughter from a bush hard by.

In his hand he held a diamond pendant. By his side was a new shower-proof overcoat, slightly damp, which he had taken off a minute previously, when a summer shower ceased. Then he had discovered to his dismay that the coat was not his. He had appropriated it as his within the hour. Or, to be scrupulously correct, it had been handed to him as his, and held up so that he could slip into it, by an obsequious young fellow who had cut his hair.

His own coat had been bought "off the peg." The coat beside him was the same in colour, material, and cut. A glance at a tab sewn to the collar showed that it had been made by the same maker.

When the sun blazed out, Mr. Spool, after taking off his overcoat, had sat down to smoke a pipe. He had looked for his tobacco pouch, which he had left in a pocket, and had found in place of it a small case containing the diamond pendant.

The diamonds were not large stones; but they were exquisitely set. Such an ornament must have cost at least fifty pounds.

II.

Mr. Spool was a perfectly honest and simple-minded person, not a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles, a man of comparative leisure, and of independent means. At the moment he felt cross because he wanted to smoke and had no tobacco. His own ordered habits made him resent the carelessness of another in leaving an expensive article of jewellery in the pocket of an overcoat. He had noticed a handsome, soldierly fellow in the chair next to him at the hair-cutting establishment. Probably this garment and the pendant belonged to him. At this moment he might be glaring at a tobacco pouch and a penny box of matches.

Mr. Spool replaced the pendant in its case, thrust it into his breast-pocket, and rose to his feet. Obviously, there was one thing to do in boring circumstances: to go back to the hair-cutting establishment, where he hoped to retrieve his tobacco pouch and with it peace of mind.

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"He sent a message to me?" She spoke eagerly, taking a step forward, looking up into Mr. Spool's face.

Ten minutes later he was informed that the military-looking gentleman whom he recalled had annexed the only other overcoat and sped away to catch a train! A taxi had been summoned; and in it the unknown had been whirled to Paddington. He was not a regular customer; nor was Mr. Spool. But—the man who had cut his hair was emphatic on this point—he appeared to be *quite* the gentleman, an agreeable conversationalist, who had said, *inter alia*, that he was looking forward to a day in the country.

Mr. Spool accepted disappointment philosophically. He left his name and address with the proprietor and went his way.

III.

BEING a kindly man, he felt sorry for the other fellow, and feared that his day in the country might be spoiled through this unfortunate interchange of overcoats. However, Mr. Spool bought some tobacco in Kensington High Street, and returned to the Gardens. Here, under the soothing influence of Nicotina, he re-examined the pendant and its case. Both looked brand-new; and inside the box he noted, with satisfaction, the name of a well-known firm in Bond Street, Messrs. Rappington and Corwen. Swiftly he reflected: "They will know the name of their customer. I must see them next."

Mr. Corwen—so it happened—did know the name of his customer. Upon the afternoon of the previous day, Major Quentin Rashleigh, D.S.O., who lived in Kensington Square, had bought the pendant and taken it away. What a coincidence! Mr. Spool's house was within a stone's throw of Kensington Square! Whereupon Mr. Corwen suggested that he would relieve Mr. Spool of further responsibility in the matter. The pendant could be sent by special messenger to Kensington Square with a covering letter. Major Rashleigh would find it on his return that evening from the country.

Mr. Spool, accustomed to have his own way, and being, as we must repeat, a simple-minded person, waved this suggestion aside.

"I happen to be a near neighbour of Major Rashleigh," he said, "and I will spare you this trouble. I am lunching at home. Here is my card. I will leave the pendant at the Major's house, and his overcoat, and I shall instruct his butler or parlourmaid to return to me my coat and my tobacco pouch."

Mr. Corwen bowed. Mr. Spool carried his credentials upon his face. To press his point, so Mr. Corwen reflected, might provoke unpleasantness; so he said suavely:

"We offered yesterday to send this pendant to Major Rashleigh's house, but he insisted upon taking it away himself. Perhaps——"

"Yes?"

"If—if it is just as convenient, you might mention to Major Rashleigh's servant that you have his overcoat, find out when he is expected to return home, and then, when he does return home, call upon him, and deliver the pendant to him personally."

Any ordinary man of the world would have filled in the lacunæ in Mr. Corwen's text. He was hinting delicately that Major Rashleigh, for reasons of his own, might object to confidence bestowed upon a servant. Mr. Spool said, with slight irritation:—

"The sooner this bothersome mistake is put right, the better. Good morning."

Mr. Corwen shrugged his shoulders and smiled deprecatingly.

IV.

It was nearly luncheon-time when Mr. Spool was ushered into a small hall by a smart parlourmaid. Perfunctorily, Mr. Spool had asked if Major Rashleigh was at home; and the parlourmaid, answering the question in the negative, had added that Mrs. Rashleigh was at home. As she spoke her mistress tripped down the stairs and paused to glance interrogatively at the stranger.

"This is Mrs. Rashleigh, sir."

The parlourmaid whisked off.

Mr. Spool admitted afterwards that he was beguiled by Beauty. It occurred to him that Rashleigh was a lucky fellow, a man to be envied. He admired the lady's frock and the soft silvery-grey oak panelling of the hall. Mrs. Rashleigh, in fine, stood in the right setting. Mr. Spool beamed at her. He decided that he would like to make her better acquaintance.

"I'm so sorry my husband is away. Are you one of his many friends? I—I don't know all of them yet."

Mr. Spool went on beaming. Beauty's voice was soft and slightly plaintive. She might be a girl hardly out of her 'teens, or a woman of five and twenty. Had this smart frock been part of a trousseau? Was he speaking to a bride?

"I met Major Rashleigh this morning," he began.

"He sent a message to me?"

She spoke eagerly, taking a step forward, looking up into Mr. Spool's face.

"No. We met for the first time this morning in a hairdresser's shop."

"Oh-h-h!"

"By mistake I took his overcoat, and I have since learned that he took mine. Here is his."

He laid it upon an ancient chest. At this moment a gleam of light was vouchsafed him. He began to interpret aright Mr. Corwen's guarded hints.

"How kind of you to return it so promptly."

"No, no; it was the obvious thing to do."

Her next remark was less easy to deal with.

"How did you know that the overcoat belonged to him?"

This was the moment for a convincing lie, but Mr. Spool hesitated. His hesitation quickened curiosity. Instinct or intuition warned Beauty that Mr. Spool was not a gifted liar.

"Major Rashleigh bought that coat only a few days ago, I told him to put his name inside the collar, but he didn't."

She pounced upon the coat and examined it. "You see; he didn't."

Mr. Spool felt that he must lie like a perfect gentleman.

Mrs. Rashleigh opened the door leading into the hall, slammed it, and, finger on lip, slipped behind a tall leather screen.

"I took the coat back to the hair-cutting shop——"

"Yes?"

"And—and the man who cut his hair said that Major Rashleigh had bustled off to catch a train."

"He had a business appointment in the City."

Mr. Spool betrayed increasing nervousness. Mrs. Rashleigh continued:—

"He told me that he might be delayed, because his business was important. I'll admit to you, Mr. Spool, that I was a wee bit vexed, because I wanted him to go with me this afternoon to Roehampton, but business *is* business, isn't it?"

Mr. Spool nodded. *Cliché* pleased him, because he used it himself. He decided, perhaps too hastily, that Mrs. Rashleigh was a dear little woman cut to the pattern he admired—at a distance. It seemed to him unthinkable that such an ingenuous creature could be "neglected"; but he recalled his first impression of the Major, whom he had summed up as a "Man about Town." Secretly he envied these debonair, jolly-voiced gentlemen-adventurers, obviously "out" for a good time. He envisaged a snug room in some country inn, and a gay pair sitting down to cold salmon, with strawberries and cream to follow.

Lost in speculation, he became aware of Mrs. Rashleigh's voice, with, with, yes, a new note in it.

"You got my husband's name and address from the man who cut his hair?"

"Where else could I get it?"

"About three hours ago?"

Again Mr. Spool hesitated, wondering whether he was blushing, but sensible that as a liar he was not distinguishing himself.

The circumstances of the case seemed to call, nay, to bellow for a more sustained effort.

"I—I didn't look at my watch. And—er—in point of fact, Mrs. Rashleigh, I never discovered the mistake till I missed my tobacco pouch."

"I see."

If she "saw," she saw blinkingly some missing word in a Cross Words Puzzle. At least, that was the impression made upon Mr. Spool, who, in his leisure moments, was a successful solver of such puzzles. Telepathy, perhaps, had established in Mr. Spool's mind the conviction that, with the

clue of "mystery," Mrs. Rashleigh was thinking, almost aloud: "Word of six letters and six blanks. Might be—ENIGMA."

As this innocent pair were glancing interrogatively at each other, the front door opened.

Major Rashleigh closed it.

V.

MRS. RASHLEIGH exclaimed gaily:—"Oh, Quentin, how nice of you to hurry back. This is Mr. Spool. He took your overcoat by mistake. Did you find that out? Is that his on your arm?"

It was. The Major surrendered the garment, as Mrs. Rashleigh continued joyously:—

"Poor Mr. Spool missed his tobacco pouch——"

"And a box of matches," added the Major. "You will find them where you left them."

"Did you leave anything in your coat, Quentin?"

"Did I?"

Unblushingly, a Man about Town turned to Mr. Spool, who laid a nervous hand upon his breast pocket. Nevertheless, he replied promptly:—

"Nothing."

"You are so careless, darling, you might have left *anything*."

"Quite," said this hardened sinner. Without consulting his wife, he went on with brazen assurance, addressing Mr. Spool:—

"Ever so many thanks. The least I can do is to offer you a drink, Mr. Spool."

"Or—luncheon," suggested Mrs. Rashleigh.

"If he has no better engagement, Prue."

"I hope he hasn't," murmured Prue.

For the last time a man conscious of his inability to deal with WOMAN upon equal terms hesitated. *Did she suspect?* If he accepted the proffered drink, she might insist upon playing Hebe. If he accepted this invitation to lunch, surely, sooner or later, he and this abandoned Lothario might have a moment alone together, when explanations would be in order. Indeed, by this time Mr. Spool was suffering from sympathy for a charming young lady and hostility against her husband.

"I have no better engagement," he said.

"Come into the dining-room," urged Mrs. Rashleigh.

She led the way; the men followed.

VI.

Luncheon was all that it should be in slightly sultry weather: fillets of sole in aspic, a *mousse* of ham, and peaches au Kirsch. Moselle cup, with a dash of curaçoa, slaked Mr. Spool's thirst. Throughout the meal Mrs. Rashleigh prattled delightfully. When coffee had been served, she rose to her feet, smiling at Mr. Spool. He could see perfectly what she did next. The Major, with his back to her, could not see. Mrs. Rashleigh flitted to the door leading into the hall, opened it, slightly slammed it, and, finger on lip, slipped behind a tall leather screen. Mr. Spool gulped down what was left of some excellent old brandy.

The Major broke an awkward silence.

"I—I left *something* in my overcoat," he observed quietly.

"Yes, here it is."

Mr. Spool handed to his host the velvet case.

"You know what's in it?"

"I do."

The Major slipped the case into his pocket, observing coolly:—

"Have another spot of brandy?"

"Thank you, no."

In spite of lacerated sensibilities, Mr. Spool smiled, because he was reflecting that he was out of an awkward situation, whereas his host was irretrievably up to the neck in it. At the same time the thought of Lady Teazle behind the screen tempered his indignation against the Major. Indeed, he felt rather sorry for him, knowing what must be coming to him later.

"Mrs. Rashleigh told me that you were taking her to Roehampton this afternoon."

"Yes."

"You have both been most hospitable."

"Not at all. You—you have done me a service. I take it that you must be curious—I take it, too, that you put two and two together and made four of 'em?"

"I made three."

The Major laughed. He had a jolly laugh; but it exasperated Mr. Spool, inasmuch as it seemed to sensitive ears to be an attempt to enlist sympathies on the wrong side; that laugh seemed to say: "Men will be men, what?" The Major continued unblushingly:—

"You guessed that what you found in my coat was not—shall we say—a present for a good girl?"

Mr. Spool shrugged his shoulders, indignant with the Major because he was chuckling.

He replied with dignity:—

"What I thought is of no consequence."

"Come, come, you look a very human person, and, may I add, a very understanding person."

"The incident is closed," said Mr. Spool.

Again the Major laughed.

"It isn't yet," said Mrs. Rashleigh.

She emerged from behind the screen.

Regardless of Mr. Spool, the Major leapt to his feet, and, in a jiffy, had her in his arms.

VII.

MR. SPOOL rose hastily, thinking of emergency exits, but Mrs. Rashleigh begged him to sit down again, adding in a voice which carried conviction :—

"I too am an understanding person. I understood, Quentin, from Mr. Spool's manner that he had found *more* than an overcoat. Somehow, he conveyed the impression that he was sorry for me. Somehow, also, I felt that out of consideration for me he was withholding information of interest to me. That is my justification for slipping behind the screen."

"Sit down, Prue. How well you look! Excitement becomes you. You eyes are sparkling; you carry a high head; I'm proud of you."

Mrs. Rashleigh sat down, ignoring her lord, but turning the sparkling eyes upon her visitor.

"Tell me," she asked, "what you found in my husband's coat." Having no answer pat to such a question, Mr. Spool shot a hunted glance at the Major, who was lying back in his chair tranquilly smoking his cigar. Mr. Spool was lost in admiration at sight of him. He recalled Jonathan Wild picking the pocket of a parson on his road to Tyburn—undefeated to the last! And then Mr. Spool reflected that all was not yet lost. Mrs. Rashleigh did not know the whole truth. In any case, he, who had indiscreetly become a party to a grave misdemeanour, must, if possible, achieve an honourable retreat.

"What I found," said Mr. Spool firmly, "has been returned to its owner. I—I have an engagement—I——"

"A *business* engagement . . . in the City, perhaps?"

She laughed derisively. Mr. Spool realized how furiously angry she was. If—if he remained, would the wind of her displeasure be tempered?

Suddenly the Major tossed across the table the velvet case.

"That is what he found, Prue. Take a squint at it. I think you will agree with me that it's rather nice, as you would put it."

Mrs. Rashleigh opened the case and glared at the pendant.

"You bought this yesterday?"

"I did."

"And this morning you were taking it to some woman."

"I was."

Hastily Mr. Spool exclaimed :—

"You will be good enough to—to excuse me."

The Major said, hospitably :—

"You must dine with us some evening, my dear fellow. We shall take it ill of you if you refuse."

He rose, holding out his hand. Mrs. Rashleigh said, defiantly :—

"Sit down, both of you. Mr. Spool may be wanted later on as a witness."

"Prudent Prue!"

"How dare you! Do you think for a moment that I'm going to take this sitting down?"

"You have suggested that we should."

Again Mr. Spool was visibly impressed. Here was a hundred per cent. he-man undismayed when tempests roared, attempting no subterfuge, disdaining lies. Inwardly Mr. Spool was ashamed of himself for admiring the Major. A true squire of dames would regard the Major—and all gentlemen of his kidney—as a menace to the domestic peace of England.

"Sit down," commanded Mrs. Rashleigh.

The men sat down.

"It's too hot for port," said the Major. "But I can commend to you a light dry sherry as a whitewash."

Whitewash!

Indignant Beauty snapped up the word.

"Sherry won't whitewash you," she declared.

Imperturbably the Major filled a glass and held it up, glancing at Mr. Spool.

"You won't? Then I will. The ladies, God bless 'em!"

To this Mr. Spool replied entreatingly :—

"Don't."

Mrs. Rashleigh, in a less acrid tone, transported perhaps to some court of law, addressed her husband.

"You had a business engagement this morning."

"I kept it."

"But it didn't keep you."

"Clever Prue."

"It didn't keep you, because you discovered that this diamond ornament was missing——"

"You have holed out in one."

"You came back to find it, if you could."

"Right again. Wonderful woman!"

"You have found it, thanks to Mr. Spool. You can take it, and yourself, back to the woman for whom you bought it here and now."

"I will, if—if Mr. Spool will scrap his engagement and escort you to Roehampton."

"If you aren't the limit!"

"Prue, darling, you are."

Prue burst into tears.

VIII.

At this moment Mr. Spool had time to reflect that Delilah had wasted both time and opportunity when she deprived Samson of his superabundant locks. Unquestionably she could have achieved her purpose by unrestrained weeping. Woman's weakness

paralyzes the strength of man. Regardless of Mr. Spool, the Major leapt to his feet, and in a jiffy had Prue in his arms.

"Let me go!"

"Not on your life."

Mr. Spool realized that he was about to break out in a profuse perspiration as the Major silenced Prue by gagging her with kisses. A modest man, he turned his head aside, overwhelmed with confusion. He might have fled unnoticed, but sensation had overpowered action. Hardly aware of what he was doing, he poured out and drank a glass of the light dry sherry.

Then he heard Prue say, gaspingly:—

"Have I made a mistake?"

She had torn herself loose, and was now confronting her husband, looking up at him piteously, aware of the domination of his eyes and the unmistakable message flashing out of them.

"We all make mistakes," replied the Major. "You, darling, made a mistake when you judged and condemned me unheard. I made a mistake when I let you hide behind that screen."

"What! You saw me?"

"Yes; in that looking-glass. I had my back to you, but I was facing it."

"Oh-h-h!"

"I admired your resource and—and took advantage of it. Where's that damned pendant?"

The case lay upon the table, where Prue had flung it. The Major opened the case, took out the pendant with its thin platinum chain, and held it out.

"Put it on, Prue. Let's see if it isn't more becoming to you than to your mother."

"Quentin! You—*wretch!*"

The Major turned to Mr. Spool. Did he wink his left eyelid as he explained:—

"Her *mother*, Spool. One of the best. I wanted to surprise her. She has never possessed any handsome trinket. She lives very quietly near Windsor. I didn't consult my wife, because she would have insisted on going with me; and I wasn't sure that her mother would accept my gift. Before I missed the thing she said: 'If you give it to me, I shall give it to Prue on her next birthday.' I told her to look at it first; and I remembered that I had stuffed it into my overcoat pocket. And then I discovered that I had brought down another man's coat. I was dressed down properly, and sent buzzing back to London. Her last words were: 'If you find it, give it to Prue.'"

To Mr. Spool's astonishment, Prue pouted.

"I do feel such a beast," she whimpered.

Again the Major winked at his visitor as Prue's slender fingers toyed with the pendant. Mr. Spool felt that he was challenged to speak the word in season. He cleared his throat, squared his shoulders, and took the stage.

"A-hem! And—er—so do I. I believed the worst, and rea-a-ally the best has—er—come to pass. This has been a lesson to me. I—I feel that I must, as a mere looker-on, apologize abjectly for my preconceived idea that Beauty"—he bowed with old-fashioned courtesy to Prue—"is too often at the mercy of the—Beast."

"He's a very extravagant beast," murmured Prue. She glanced roguishly at the Major. "Why didn't you take this on 'appro'?" she asked.

"Because I had a hunch your mother would refuse to wear it—and that you wouldn't."

Prue laughed as she annexed the pendant. Then she put into words what a pernicketty old bachelor was thinking.

"I'm the little beast, Mr. Spool, and he's the big beauty, isn't he?"

Mr. Spool was too polite to reply, but he thought to himself:—

"My mother always told me that it was rude to contradict a lady."

SINNERS BEWARE!—No. 5.

THE IMPERFECT CRIME

By

E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM

Illustrated by JACK M. FAULKS

A PALE-FACED, slim, and not undistinguished-looking young man emerged from the bureau of M. Dumesnil, cashier and financier omnipotent of the Sporting Club, and closed the door softly behind him. His first rapid glance up and down the heavily-carpeted passage showed him that he was in luck. The official at the top of the stairs was talking to the lift attendant, and both had their backs turned towards him. The flunkey in powdered hair and black satin knee breeches, who stood at the corner near the entrance to the *chemie* room, had temporarily disappeared altogether. There was not a living soul who could have witnessed his exit. With his hands in his pockets, he strolled along, turned sharp to the left on the other side of the staircase, passed the lift gates, and opened the door of the small lavatory opposite to him. Here again fortune favoured him, as up to a point it usually does favour the criminal of courage. The place was empty.

The young man who had entered the lavatory divested himself of his dinner-coat, hung it up, and carefully examined the sleeves. They were absolutely unstained. Then he paid meticulous attention to his shirt, and, looking in the mirror opposite, scrutinized closely the cuffs. These, too, were flawless. Only on the third finger of his right hand was a stain, and that very small. He turned on the water, plunged in his hand, used the scrubbing brush fearlessly, and dried his fingers upon a towel, which he searched with anxious eyes for any incriminating mark before he threw it into the wire receptacle. Then he brushed his hair, more from habit than necessity, put on his dinner coat once more, and sallied out. The lift attendant and his friend were still talking, but turned round and bowed as he passed. To have escaped attention altogether was more than he dared hope for, and he was fully prepared for their recognition. He even glanced into the bar, and nodded to the barman, but, instead of entering, he looked in at the *chemie* rooms, reserved a place at the high table, which did not commence play until midnight, stepped back again, and made his way along the passage towards the Nouvel Hotel. The man at the desk saluted him with a low bow.

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"Do you recognize that?" demanded the Chef de la Sûreté in a tone which was almost that of a judge addressing a prisoner.

He addressed the liveried attendant who opened the door.

"Nothing doing here yet, Charles," he yawned. "I shall have a look at the Salles Privées."

"They start later here each evening, sir," the man observed. "There's a big dinner party in the Paris, too, to-night. There won't be much of a crowd here before midnight."

In the lounge of the Nouvel Hotel the young man paused for a moment. His plan of action was definite, but things had gone so much better than he had dared hope for that he was inclined to modify it. He walked out of the swing doors, down the short drive, crossed the road, and entered the Casino proper. Here he met with what was to him his first disappointment. The tables were sparsely occupied, and there was no crowd at any particular spot. He hesitated for a few seconds, then fell in line with the little queue at one of the cashiers' desks, changed a twenty-mille jeton for counters of a lower denomination, repeated the proceeding at another *caisse* where business was brisk, and gambled with another five-mille at a table where some high play was going on. He won twice, and passed on towards the Salles Privées, with bulging pockets. Arrived at his destination, he turned sharp to the left, and entered the bar. Here, he seated himself upon a stool, carefully criticized his appearance in the looking-glass opposite, and somewhat astonished the barman, to whom he was well known, by drinking a double liqueur brandy at a single gulp.

"Bad indigestion, Charles," he explained, with a pleasant smile. "Give me another ordinary one."

They chatted for a few minutes, after which the young man strolled on to the playing rooms. He marked a place at a *chemie* table which had not yet commenced, changed another ten-mille into counters at a crowded board, and relapsed into an easy-chair close to the *chemie* table, where he proposed to play. Then he drew out his cigarette-case, lit a cigarette, and gave himself up to careful meditation. Step by step, he reviewed his evening. He had dined at his usual table in the restaurant of the club, and had talked there with several acquaintances, and both *maîtres d'hôtel*, of his afternoon winnings at Nice, and of the fact that he had been repaid an old gambling debt by a man whom he had met there accidentally. That was quite in order.

He had left his table early, frankly announcing his intention to gamble. He had mounted the stairs of the Sporting Club cheerfully, found the place almost deserted, as it was a few minutes before the formal opening time, and entered the bureau of M. Dumesnil unnoticed. M. Dumesnil was alone, and had the good taste not to utter even a groan when the long, marvellously-tempered blade sunk inch by inch through his shirt-front into his heart.

Ever since then things had gone a little better than planned. The weapon—the only thing he had left behind—was a home-manufactured one—the blade of which had been in his possession for many years, the home-made handle riveted on by himself. No soul had seen him enter or leave that office. His booty was practically untraceable, for his first prize had been the long list on Dumesnil's desk containing the numbers of the notes and the identifying marks of the high-priced counters. He began to feel marvellously cool and self-assured. A crime which no one could prove was non-existent.

He sauntered across, and took his place at the *chemin-de-fer* table, where play was just beginning. Luck followed him as it sometimes does the evil doer. His winnings were considerable, and a curious species of excitement seized him. He had been wasting years of his life. Crime—cunningly devised crime—was the brave man's adjunct to success. He had been a fool ever to have walked in the shadow of poverty, ever to have neglected those gifts of which he certainly now found himself possessed.

FOR the first time in his life, Peter Hames, the American painter, whose villa at La Turbie had been the scene of several more or less well-known adventures, heard Sybil Christian's voice in his ear without that responsive throb of the senses which, as a rule, marched with her coming. He had been standing on the outskirts of a little group of acquaintances, all eagerly discussing the tragedy of the evening, but he followed her without protest to one of the quiet seats of the inner room of the bar. Then he saw that she was really perturbed, and forgot his first irritation.

"Mr. Hames," she said, "this is a terrible affair."

He looked at her curiously.

"You were no special friend of Dumesnil's, were you?" he asked.

"I certainly was not," she admitted. "I disliked him very much, as I think most people did. It is of the living I am thinking; not of the dead."

His little interrogative nod was an invitation to her to proceed.

"Dumesnil is finished with," she said. "One may be sorry for him, or not, but the fact remains that he can feel no more. Someone will have to suffer, of course. That is as it should be, but do you know what I think the most terrible thing in life? Let

me tell you. It is to be wrongfully accused of a crime like that."

"Is there any fear of anything of the sort happening?"

"I think that there is."

She looked around. There was absolutely no one within hearing.

"One of the stupidest things in the world has happened," she confided. "Of course, nearly everybody believes that the two croupiers who wanted instructions about opening the new table were the first people to enter the bureau and find Dumesnil dead. As a matter of fact, they weren't."

"How the mischief do you know that?" he asked.

"I know because I saw someone go in before them," she replied. "Not only did I see him, but three others did."

"Are you going to tell me who it was?"

"It was Clive Densham. I saw him go in, and I saw him come out, looking like death. Lady Hackett saw him, too; so did Jack and Minnie Fulsford."

"This was before the croupiers went in?" Peter Hames questioned.

"Three or four minutes before."

"Why didn't Clive give the alarm at once?"

Sybil groaned.

"Why does one sometimes lose one's nerve in a crisis?" she rejoined, bitterly. "I can only imagine that he was terrified. Everyone knows that he hasn't a penny, that he lost everything last night, and that Dumesnil had threatened not to advance him any more money. I suppose that he was simply too terrified to give the alarm. Anyhow, he is sitting there at the corner of the bar drinking, and, although I haven't said a word, I believe Minnie Fulsford has, for I saw some of the principal officials with the Commissaire of Police a few minutes ago, looking at him, and talking to one another."

"What do you want me to do?" Peter inquired.

She looked at him gratefully.

"I have spoken to Jack Fulsford and Lady Hackett, and they have agreed for the moment not to open their mouths unless someone else is accused. In the meantime, I want you to talk to Clive. Ask him why he didn't give the alarm when he found out what had happened."

"I'll do that if you wish," Peter Hames assented, "but wouldn't it be better for you to speak to him yourself? You actually saw him come out?"

She shook her head.

"A man is always better in a case like this," she insisted. "Clive Densham would hate confessing to me that he lost his nerve. I'm sure he'd tell you the sober truth."

"When do you want me to tackle him?"

"This instant. I am so afraid that they may get hold of him, and ask him a lot of questions before he has pulled himself together. He has been drinking steadily ever since he came out of the room, and he is certain to contradict himself."

"You don't think he did it?" Peter Hames suggested, curtly.

"I could as soon believe that I had done it myself," was the emphatic rejoinder.

PETER HAMES went on his mission. The young man Densham, as a rule surrounded by friends and acquaintances, was seated at the far end of the bar alone. His hair was unkempt, his eyes a little bloodshot. He seemed to have wrapped himself in a mantle of silence and inaccessibility. Nevertheless, Peter Hames drew a stool to his side.

"Clive, I want to talk to you," he said.

The young man scowled.

"Leave me alone, there's a good fellow," he begged. "I am trying to get drunk by myself."

"That's just what you mustn't do," Peter Hames continued, firmly. "You may have to face a little trouble at any time. It is better for you to keep your head clear, and be ready to deal with it."

The young man swung around and faced him—a good-looking lad ordinarily, but almost repulsive now, when the signs of incipient intoxication were apparent.

"What do you mean?" he demanded.

"It's just as well you should know," Peter Hames told him. "Several people saw you come out of Dumesnil's office before the croupiers went in. You did a damned silly thing, Clive—not giving the alarm—and you've got to decide now what's best to be done."

"Well, what is best to be done?" the young man asked. "I know I've been a fool. I felt all the time that someone must have seen me, but I couldn't speak. Then I began to think the worst."

"Will you put yourself in my charge for ten minutes?" Peter Hames suggested.

"Of course I will," was the prompt acquiescence.

"Very well. You're coming first to have a wash. Pull yourself together, and look quite as usual as you leave the bar, and afterwards we'll come back, and we'll have a drink together quietly. I rather imagine that the best thing for us to do then is to go and see the authorities."

"I'll do just what you say," Densham agreed, slipping from his stool.

They passed out of the bar, and round the corner to the small lavatory, without interference, although Peter Hames, with an unpleasant premonition, had caught

sight of a gendarme guarding the passage to the Hotel de Paris, and of two or three others in the hall below. A few minutes later, a very different looking young man walked boldly by his friend's side back to the bar.

"What have you been drinking?" Hames inquired.

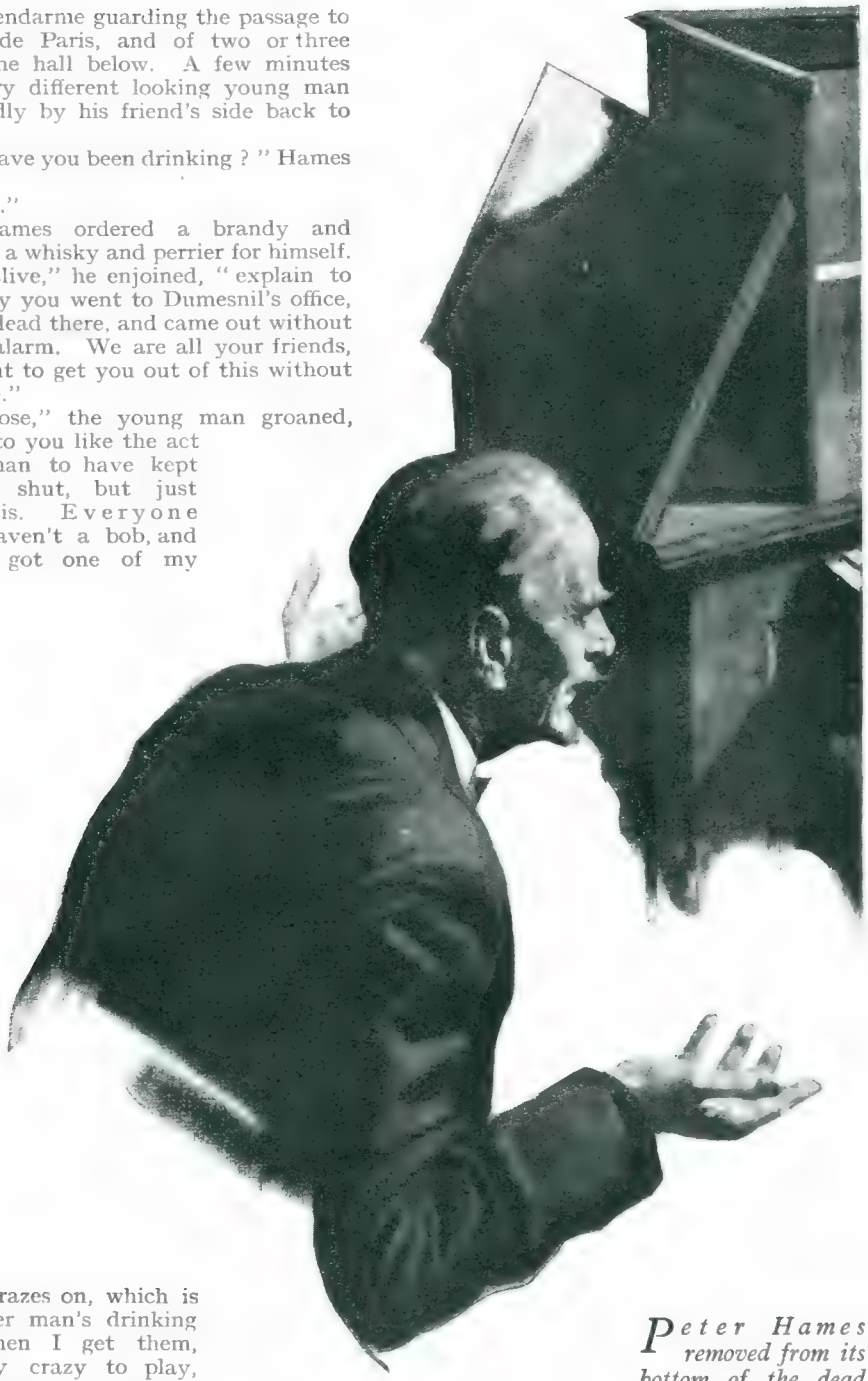
"Brandy."

Peter Hames ordered a brandy and perrier, and a whisky and perrier for himself.

"Now, Clive," he enjoined, "explain to me just why you went to Dumesnil's office, found him dead there, and came out without giving the alarm. We are all your friends, and we want to get you out of this without any trouble."

"I suppose," the young man groaned, "it seems to you like the act of a madman to have kept my mouth shut, but just consider this. Everyone knows I haven't a bob, and that I've got one of my gambling crazes on, which is like another man's drinking bout. When I get them, I'm simply crazy to play, and I sometimes have said that I'd do anything at such times to get hold of money. Then perhaps a year goes by, and I don't touch a card, and don't want to.

"Anyway, in I went to that office, and



Peter Hames removed from its bottom of the dead speck of something into an envelope and

leaned over and resting place, at the man's waistcoat, a which he dropped thrust into his pocket.

I honestly believe that I had some sort of an idea of taking old Dumesnil by the throat, and frightening him if he refused to let me have a few milles. However, when I got there, Dumesnil was crumpled up in his chair, drops of blood were falling from his shirt front on to the carpet, and his face —well, you've seen dead men before; I hadn't. I stared at him, and my first impulse was to rush out of the place shouting. I wish to God I had done so. What really happened was that, with my hand on the

door knob, I looked back. I seemed to take in the whole ghastly little scene. Dumesnil was dead, with a dagger sticking out of his shirt front. All those piles of notes and counters with which he is always surrounded, were gone, too.

"For a second or so I seemed to see things quite coolly. I've actually been fool enough to talk about what I was going to do to Dumesnil if he wouldn't advance me more money. I could see the same expression on the face of everyone I met, when I rushed out and announced that Dumesnil had been murdered. I could have read the thought in their eyes. I was suddenly afraid, Hames, as I have been afraid of nothing else before in my life. I opened and closed the door, and I staggered down the passage. I wasn't sure whether anyone had seen me or not. I struggled downstairs, and outside into the fresh air. I think I was half inclined to make a bolt for it. Then I realized how damnably foolish that was, so I came back, climbed on to that stool, and I've been there ever since, drinking. Several people came over to speak to me—told me even what had happened—and I told them all to go to hell. Then I began to feel that everyone in the bar was whispering about it. I daresay they are now, but I've got over the shock. What shall I do?"

"You'll come straight with me to Monsieur Perault, and the Commissaire of Police," Peter Hames insisted.

"I'm quite ready," the other assented.

THE two men passed out of the bar, and there were very few who did not guess their errand. An attendant outside, in response to Peter Hames's inquiry, ushered them into a room at the end of the corridor. M. Perault, the manager, with two of his subordinates, and an official of the police, were seated at a table. They had evidently just completed an examination of the bureau, the key to which lay upon the table.

"Monsieur Perault," Peter Hames announced, "our young friend here, Mr. Clive Densham, wishes to tell you what he knows of this affair. He was in the bureau before your croupiers."

"Ha! ha!" M. Perault ejaculated. "We have heard something of this. Sit down, Mr. Densham, if you please. Monsieur Cheval, the Chef de la Sûreté, will doubtless like to ask you a few questions."

The latter, a short, military-looking man of middle age, with a heavy moustache, and gold pince-nez, addressed himself at once to his task.

"You, then, apparently, Monsieur Densham," he said, "were the first to discover that Monsieur Dumesnil had been murdered?"

"Apparently so," the young man admitted. "I was certainly in his bureau before the two croupiers."

"Will you tell me why you did not at once give the alarm?" the Chef de la Sûreté asked.

"I cannot answer that question even to myself," Densham replied. "I simply don't know. I was horrified at what I saw, in the first place, and in the second, it seemed to me that everyone knew I was poor and had gone to borrow money, and that I should be accused of the murder."

"I see. And did you murder him?" the Chef de la Sûreté added sharply.

"Of course I didn't," was the indignant disclaimer.

"Well, well, for your own sake we hope not. Where did you go to when you left the bureau?"

"To the bar."

"Nowhere else?"

Densham hesitated.

"Yes," he acknowledged. "Before I went to the bar I went downstairs and out into the street."

Monsieur Cheval made a note.

"Out into the street? Why?"

"I don't know. My head was going round, and I wanted some air."

"Perhaps you don't know where you went, either?" his questioner suggested.

"As a matter of fact I don't," Densham maintained. "I don't think I was quite conscious. I walked some distance up towards the Casino, but how far I don't know. I realized suddenly how foolish I was to leave the place. I came straight back, and remained in the bar until Mr. Hames came and spoke to me. He advised me to come here with him, and I did."

"It seems rather a pity," the Chef de la Sûreté remarked, peering through his pince-nez with narrowed eyes at the pallid young man, "that you did not come here before you took that little stroll outside. Now tell me, Monsieur Densham, did you look around the bureau at all? Did you notice that from his desk plaques for large amounts, as well as the mille notes which Monsieur Dumesnil kept always under his own hands, were missing?"

"I noticed nothing beyond that horrible blood on Dumesnil's shirt-front," the young man declared passionately. "I wasn't in a condition to notice anything."

"Have you any objection to being searched, Monsieur Densham?" Monsieur Perault asked.

"None whatever."

Monsieur Cheval shrugged his shoulders.

"That will probably come later," he

pointed out, "but if my friend considers——"

He waved an acquiescent hand. One of the gendarmes, standing at the door, took Densham into a corner. He returned in a few moments with a miscellaneous lot of articles which he laid upon the table. The money amounted to less than five hundred francs. The other things were the usual etceteras which every man is supposed to carry with him.

"What was your object in going into the bureau?" Monsieur Cheval inquired.

"To borrow money from Monsieur Dumesnil," was the frank acknowledgment.

"You were in need of money, then?"

"Desperately."

Monsieur Perault intervened for a moment, talking in an undertone to the Chef de la Sûreté, who was a stranger to the neighbourhood. He thought it only right to mention the fact that Clive Densham was the son of old and respected inhabitants of the place, and, although he was without a doubt impecunious, he and his people had always been welcome visitors to the Sporting Club. The Chef de la Sûreté listened, but remained unimpressed.

"Crime must have its commencement," he observed, "and the young man has admitted that he needed money desperately. He has none on him at the present moment, it is true, but what about that little visit outside?"

There was further discussion. Peter Hames ventured to point out that the young man was willing to give his word not to leave the building, that there could be no possible hiding place in which he could deposit the large sum which was missing from the bureau, and finally that, after all, what he had done, although unwise, was by no means unnatural. The shock of discovering a murder was quite sufficient to unbalance a sensitive person. There was more whispering between the Chef de la Sûreté and Monsieur Perault. Finally the latter made an announcement.

"It is to be understood, of course," he said, "that proceedings in this room are entirely informal. If you, Mr. Hames, will undertake to remain with Mr. Densham for the next hour, and make no attempt to leave the buildings, you are both at liberty to depart."

"Before I go," Clive Densham declared, "I should like to assure you that my visit to the bureau was simply an attempt to borrow money. I never dreamed of doing Monsieur Dumesnil any harm, nor should I have done so under any conditions, and I did not touch a penny of the money which is missing, or one of the counters."

The two men at the table listened in non-committal silence. The gendarme opened the door. Peter Hames and his companion made their way back to the bar. The first informal inquiry into the murder of Jacques Dumesnil was at an end.

ACTING upon Peter Hames's advice, Densham decided to face it out amongst his friends, and he was very soon surrounded. He was perhaps one of the most popular young residents on the Riviera, and there wasn't a soul who believed him capable of the murder of anyone, much less of poor old Dumesnil, who, notwithstanding his unpopularity, was notoriously frail and in ill-health. At the same time, the absolute absence of evidence against anybody gave a sort of queer flavour to the affair. The general opinion was that Densham, at any rate, would hear no more about it except that he might have to give his evidence before another court. Just as they were leaving for a stroll in the roulette rooms, however, Monsieur Perault himself entered. He was looking a little harassed.

"We shall have to ask Monsieur Densham to spare us one more minute," he regretted. "Monsieur Hames may accompany him if he wishes."

In silence, the three men returned to the room at the end of the corridor. The Chef de la Sûreté waited until Densham had approached within a few feet of him. Then suddenly he flung upon the table before him a ten-mille jeton, and pointed to it with a dramatic finger.

"Do you recognize that?" he demanded, and this time his tone, whether purposely or not, was almost the tone of a judge addressing a prisoner.

"It's a ten-mille jeton, obviously," Densham replied. "I don't recognize it particularly. Why should I? I don't play so high myself."

"You say that you left this place immediately after the murder was committed, which must have been at about ten o'clock. That jeton was picked up in the street between here and the Casino. People don't throw ten-mille jetons about, as a rule, if they are sane. Listen to me, young man; I suggest that you left this place, dazed with horror at the deed which you had committed, and that, in your excitement and natural nervousness, one of the jetons which formed part of your booty slipped from your pocket. There it is. What have you to say?"

"Only that it's all rot," Densham insisted, indignantly. "I've never handled a ten-mille jeton in my life."

The Chef de la Sûreté cleared his throat, and referred to some notes he had made.

"Clive Densham," he began, "you were the first person to be seen coming out of the bureau after the unfortunate Dumesnil had met with his death. With that terrible tragedy actually before your eyes, without warning to anyone, you crept from the place, and wandered aimlessly out into the street, where this jeton from Dumesnil's bureau was later picked up. The law gives me no choice in this matter. I am compelled to place you under arrest. You will be taken down to the Gendarmerie now, and formally charged."

The young man bore himself bravely enough this time, although the colour seemed to have been sucked out of his cheeks.

"I never touched Dumesnil," he declared, doggedly. "He was dead when I entered the bureau."

The Chef de la Sûreté rose to his feet.

"The informal part of the proceedings is completed," he announced. "It is now an affair for the recognized authorities."

PROBABLY no single item of news had ever created more sensation in the Sporting Club than the instantly confirmed rumour that Clive Densham—one of the best-known young residents of the place—had been marched down the stairs which he had often mounted so lightheartedly, a gendarme on each side, under arrest upon the charge of murder. Two tables of chemin-de-fer were broken up at once, the participants—mostly ladies—declaring themselves unable to continue. The call of the croupier from the principal roulette table was made in vain, for everyone was talking to his neighbour, or across the table, and the last thing they thought of was putting on a stake. Excited little groups stood about in all the corners. The bar was crowded, but did very little business, as no one seemed to have the heart to drink. Sybil Christian, after a long search, discovered Peter Hames in conference with two of the managers, and unceremoniously dragged him away.

"Is it my fancy," she asked him severely, "or are you taking this matter just a little lightly?"

"I couldn't do that," he assured her. "On the other hand, I honestly believe that they'll have to set him free in a day or two. There is no direct evidence. I have been talking to Maître Lapouge, the lawyer, and I am of his opinion. He says that there is enough evidence to arrest, but not to convict."

"Listen to me, please," she begged, "because I do know something of what I am talking about. The French legal policy is different from the English or American. When they have made an arrest, they devote every scrap of intelligence the police or detective force can summon together to finding that particular man guilty. Having once arrested Clive Densham, they will have a perfect horror of letting him go. There will be detectives at work, of course, but they will be at work in one direction only—to collect further evidence of Densham's guilt. They have finished now with studying the case as a case. They have their hands upon a man, they have some evidence against him, and they'll work until they have more. They're fair enough in their way, but it isn't their business to find any other suspect. They can keep him in prison practically as long as they like, whilst they search for evidence. The evidence they search for will be incriminating evidence against Clive Densham."

"That's very well put," he conceded, "and I believe it's not far from the truth."

"Very well, then," she went on, "every scrap of intelligence you or I or anyone else possesses must go to finding the really guilty person, and we must start at once."

"You place it, I presume, outside the bounds of possibility," he asked, "that Clive Densham might be guilty?"

"Absolutely."

"I don't know the young man as intimately as some of you," Peter Hames meditated, "but you can't get away from the fact that he was desperately hard up, that he had one of his fevers for gambling upon him, that he had actually gone about telling people what he was going to do to Dumesnil if the old man wouldn't advance what he wanted. He entered the bureau in that spirit. It makes the story that he found him dead, and then, without any particular reason, gave no alarm, a little difficult to believe, doesn't it—especially when he had to confess that he left the place and didn't know where he went to?"

"That will do," she pleaded. "That's the official point of view, and it's almost enough to cost a man his life. Discard it, please, will you, for my sake? Work backwards, and wipe out Clive Densham. Supposing that he didn't do it, who did?"

"It's terribly difficult in this country to work unofficially, but I see your point, and I'll do my best," Peter Hames promised. . . .

He began his task by changing a mille note into hundreds, and, with these in his pocket, he commenced a series of friendly and gossiping conversations with the attendants who had been on duty just before the opening of the Club. At the end of half an hour he had made slight but definite progress. He had ascertained first that from the time of M. Dumesnil opening his bureau and

The Prince raised his shapely hand, and glanced at the disaster which had befallen him.

establishing himself there at about twenty past nine, no one else had been seen to enter or leave it except Clive Densham.

Secondly, there were only about a dozen people in the Club, most of whom were having a scratch meal in the bar, and did not leave it until after the tragedy. The exceptions consisted of two elderly ladies who made a nightly habit of standing out in the corridor or in the doorway of the bar, watching for the opening of the *salles de jeux*, that they might get their favourite places at the *trente et quarante* table; an elderly gentleman of fabulous wealth, who could only walk with the help of crutches; and a young man known to most people—a great gambler, but a most agreeable player at *chemin-de-fer*, Prince Krotsky, a Hungarian Pole, whose family before the War had been socially famous in Paris and London.

His presence there was accounted for by the fact that he had dined downstairs in the restaurant at his favourite corner table alone, and had come up before the Club was open, to drink a glass of brandy at the bar,

and secure his place at *chemin-de-fer*. As soon as he had done this he had left the building for an hour, and was now established at the place he had reserved, and was apparently winning heavily. Peter Hames's next move was more difficult. He sought out Monsieur Perault, with a request. The manager was doubtful. He was as anxious to help the young man as anyone could be, but a gendarme stood outside the bureau, strict orders had been left by the Chef de la Sûreté that nothing should be touched there until the arrival of a finger-print expert, and a detective from Marseilles. Nevertheless, Monsieur Perault compromised. He produced the key of the bureau, whispered a few words to the gendarme on guard, and himself accompanied Peter Hames inside.

"Don't let your hand rest anywhere," he begged. "I expect we shall get into trouble about this, but to me it is incredible, as it is to you, that that young man, beloved of everybody, could have committed a crime so horrible."

He turned on the light with shaking fingers, and gave only one shuddering glance in the direction of the dead man.

"I beg that you will hurry, Mr. Hames," he whispered, hoarsely.

Peter Hames wasted no time. He went down on his hands and knees upon the floor and searched every inch of the carpet. Then he stood up, and made a thorough examination of the mahogany counter. Finally, setting his teeth and struggling hard against a fit of revulsion, he lifted the flap of the counter, stepped behind it, and bent over the crumpled form of the murdered man. He drew from his pocket a seldom-used magnifying glass and made a close examination of the dead man's shirt front. Finally he turned to the manager.

"Monsieur Perault," he begged, "there is a small article, probably without the smallest significance, of which I wish to possess myself. It is resting at the present moment upon the waistcoat of Monsieur Dumesnil."

"It would be better to touch nothing," M. Perault faltered.

"On principle, I quite agree with you," Peter Hames acquiesced. "But for once, Monsieur Perault, I beg of you to grant a little latitude. The French law is a magnificent thing, but it has but one idea—the criminal. This trifle is probably not of the slightest importance, but I want to remove it myself. Will you be my witness?"

M. Perault demurred, but stepped reluctantly forward. His companion leaned over and removed from its resting place, at the bottom of the dead man's waistcoat, a speck of something which seemed to have a blue tinge. He dropped it into an envelope, which he thrust into his pocket.

"This is scarcely likely to be of any significance," he admitted, "but I will keep it for the present, if I may."

M. Perault nodded uneasily.

"I will confess, Mr. Hames," he said, "I have done wrong in letting you re-enter this room. I beg of you now to come away. I shall find it hard to explain my position to the Chef when he returns."

"I don't think you need worry," Peter Hames reassured him. "There doesn't seem to be a thing here in the shape of a clue. Besides, they have their man."

M. Perault opened the door.

"You will come now, please," he insisted.

Peter Hames asked his companion one more question.

"Monsieur Perault," he said, "you report a large number of high-priced counters missing. I presume that if these were held for several days it would be possible by entering the Casino in the morning, say in a fortnight's time, purchasing a jeton and studying it carefully, to detach the gummed-on labels from the old ones, and bring them up to date?"

Monsieur Perault grudgingly admitted the fact.

"Now, will you do one thing more for me?" Peter Hames begged. "It is for the good of us all—and myself included. Will you send across with me to the Salles Privées, someone who shall authorize the various officials there to answer any questions I may put."

"With the utmost pleasure," Monsieur Perault approved. "It is an intelligent idea. Anything I can do, Monsieur Hames—anything I can do in the world to help prove the innocence of our young friend, I would do joyously. The only thing is, the police are the police. I have exceeded my powers in permitting you to revisit the bureau. From henceforth it must be considered sealed."

IT was barely one o'clock when Peter Hames, a little tired but filled with a queer, tremulous kind of exultation, returned to the Sporting Club. The place was fuller now than ever. He made his way to the railed-in baccarat table, where people were standing five and six deep outside. One of the *chefs*, however, recognized him, and let him in.

"Very high play to-night, monsieur," he whispered. "Monsieur le Prince had won at one time ten millions. He loses now heavily."

Inside the rails the crowd was not so great. Peter Hames easily found a place opposite Krotsky. He studied him with fixed and curious expression for several

minutes. He was a young man of medium height, absolutely pale, with hollow eyes, and the long, nervous fingers of the gambler. He was taking a bank at baccarat, and Peter Hames watched him deal the cards. For a moment, he felt a little catch in his throat. The night had been over-full of events. The atmosphere of the place itself seemed charged with emotion. He set his teeth, and moved with difficulty to where Sybil Christian was standing.

"Your friend Krotsky seems to be losing," he remarked.

She shrugged her shoulders.

"I suppose he can afford it," she observed. "They say that he had an enormous win at Nice recently."

Peter Hames glanced at the "shoe."

"They'll have to make the cards directly," he pointed out. "Do you know Krotsky well enough to ask him to have a drink with us?"

"I think so," she assented, a little dubiously. "I find him sometimes rather a nuisance, as a matter of fact."

"I'll meet you at the door of the bar, or in the annex," Peter Hames suggested.

"I'll bring him along," she promised. "Any news?" she added, wistfully.

"There may be later on."

Prince Krotsky was at any rate a fine gambler. Notwithstanding an hour of tragic losses, he was bending over Sybil Christian as they emerged from the room, like a man who had no other thought in life than to win a smile from that very difficult young lady. She laid her hand upon Peter Hames's arm.

"Prince," she said, "I want to introduce a friend of mine. Mr. Peter Hames—Prince Krotsky."

The Prince responded courteously but without enthusiasm.

"We are going in to have a drink," Sybil continued. "Will you join us?"

"With great pleasure. But first of all, Prince, have you noticed that you have lost one of those small but very beautiful turquoises in your ring?"

The Prince raised his shapely hand, and glanced at the disaster which had befallen him.

"Bad setting," he murmured. "I bought the stones in Colombo last year, and was stupid enough to have them set there."

"Well, you're luckier than you deserve," Peter Hames remarked. "Come with me and I'll show you the missing stone."

The Prince agreed, apparently without demur. They walked down the corridor together. When they reached the room with the gendarme stationed outside, however, the Prince stopped suddenly.

"My God," he exclaimed, "that's the room in which poor Dumesnil was murdered!"

Peter Hames nodded.

"Yes," he said, with his hand upon the knob of the door. "We are going inside."

AN earthquake rumbled and swayed under the feet of the Prince. There was a sobbing in his ears. He took a quick step backwards. Somehow or other the gay throng of people ascending and descending the stairs, passing into the Rooms or out into the bar, seemed to consist of gendarmes—a gendarme to his left, another on his right. Race or some latent quality helped. The thunders ceased. The floor was steady beneath his feet.

"Well, it's a queer place to bring me," he commented, smiling. "I've no fancy for horrors, and it would scarcely have been here, Mr. Hames, that you found my stone."

He entered the room firmly enough, Peter Hames's hand in friendly fashion upon his shoulder, and, with a click, the door was closed. The Chef de la Sûreté, his anger at being dragged out of bed suddenly dispersed, rose to his feet.

"This is Prince Krotsky," Peter Hames explained. "It seemed to Monsieur le Prince here that he might be able to help us in this matter of poor Densham. One finds over at the Salles Privées that a considerable number of plaques which might have come from Monsieur Dumesnil's evening store, were changed there, and, although they are, of course, almost impossible to trace, one of the officials of the place believes that it was the Prince who changed them. Furthermore——"

Peter Hames paused. The Chef de la Sûreté drew an envelope from his pocket, and shook a small object out on to the counter.

"Furthermore," the latter continued, "this fragment of stone, Prince, was found resting at the bottom of the waistcoat of the murdered man. Will you permit me to see whether it fits with the empty space in your ring?"

The Prince drew his ring from his finger, and laid it upon the counter. A little exclamation broke from the lips of the onlookers. The stone fitted exactly.

"You are willing, Monsieur le Prince," the Chef de la Sûreté asked, "to submit yourself to an interrogation?"

The Prince's long fingers were again busy. Peter Hames was within a yard of him, but he acted upon one of the principles of his life, and he moved neither hand nor foot. The gendarme stood with his back to the door, and the Chef de la Sûreté was on the other side of the counter. So Prince Krotsky blew out his brains in ease and comfort, and Clive Densham slept in his own bed after all.

MY LIFE

By

I, [illegible]
[illegible]
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[illegible]

ON THE STAGE

LILLAH McCARTHY

Edited by Lily Hughes

II.—"Arms and the Man"—G.B.S. Says a Few Words!—I Meet Mr. Asquith—John Masefield and "Nan"—A Letter from J. M. Barrie—A Performance at 10, Downing Street

"THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA" brought me in touch with a great many well-known people who wrote and asked to come and see me. Altogether life was very interesting. I was busy rehearsing Julia Craven in "The Philanderer," when I got ill and was not able to act for many months. Everyone was kindness itself to me. G. B. S. had spoken to me about doing his playlet, "The Dark Lady of the Sonnets." I wanted to act again, and hearing it was to be put on I wrote to him to say I was quite well enough to play and would be furious if he put it on without me. I also asked him to introduce me to Charles Frohman, who was visiting London. He wrote:—

"April 17th, 1907.

"Delighted to hear that you are furious. It is a sign of returning vigour.

"Why should I introduce you to Frohman? We should probably never see you again. Let him come after you if he wants you.

"Yours ever,

"G. BERNARD SHAW.

As for "The Dark Lady," the piece was not done for some years later, and again I was too ill to act in it. It seemed destined that the part was not for me.

December of the same year, 1907, I went to the Savoy to play Raina in Shaw's "Arms and the Man." Charles Ricketts designed my costumes—glorious colour effects he evolved for me. I loved playing Raina—it is a jolly part, full of real good fun. Shaw, as was his usual practice, produced the play. Here is an example of how he watched every detail and of his liberality of criticisms:—

"30th December, 1907.

"I am now quite convinced that it is a mistake to say 'You look ever so much nicer' (in the third act) before you come down to the table. You can take as much time as you like strolling down and looking at him; the more the better, in fact.

"When Bluntschli sits down and says, 'My dear young lady, don't let this worry you,' you are so full of the business you have just before you that you do not listen to him. When he says, 'One is hearing people tell lies,' you do not play to it.

"In the melodramatic bit immediately after—'That is how men think of women' and 'Captain Bluntschli!!!'—you have got the idea perfectly; but you have not yet carried your dramatic indignation to the point of totally forgetting your

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clothes. You still do not sweep with a sufficiently majestic unconsciousness of them.

"You now say, 'How did you find me out?' in the act of sitting down. This is quite fatal to the effect. You must sit down, look at him, and then speak.

"Be careful not to let down 'Oh, how could you be so stupid!' That whole speech should come out with the most intense vexation.

"Don't make a pause between 'You have a low shopkeeping mind' and 'You think of things that never come into a gentleman's head.' The two sentences should tumble out on top of one another.

"You now always miss the cue 'first-rate stable.' Fix it hard in your head; we must not have a hitch in the finale.

"You are quite right about the line in the book being 'Some soldiers, I know, are afraid of death'; but the book, as usual, is wrong. Better say 'afraid to die.'

"The part makes such enormous demands on your presence of mind that I feel quite apologetic about it. The transitions are very sudden, and come one after the other with fearful rapidity. But, on the other hand, when once they become mechanical, their effect is certain. To get the maximum of effect, you must feed Bluntschli very carefully. Your high horse will not amuse the audience unless he knocks you off it; and you must take care to caracole very proudly indeed every time a fall is coming. However, these are only counsels of perfection. You must now let yourself go and enjoy yourself; even if you miss a few points, you have enough in hand for a handsome success. So go in and win.

"In haste,

"Yours ever,

"G. Bernard Shaw."

When we had been running for five weeks Shaw wrote me a real scorcher, finding fault with everything I did:—

"6th February, 1908.

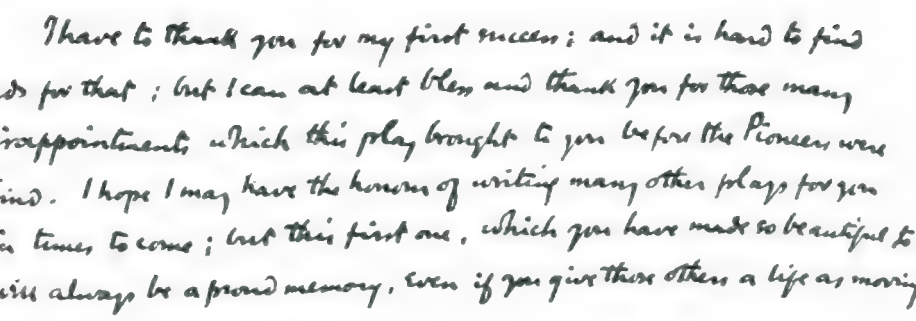
"Raina has gone to bits. I do not mean as to the drying up: that I understand. But it is clear that you have never gone back to the beginning of the play since you said 'How did you find me out?' on the first night. You now play the part unstilted all through; and the effect is disastrous. Loraine is ten times as good as he was; and Auriol Lee is as solid as a rock and has been advancing too; but Raina has gone back, and the result is that Robert plays you off the stage now. What is worse, in his desperation at your failure to feed him properly, he has found out how to drive the play through without you. Since you will not let him get his effects by walking over him and making the anti-climax

A happy snapshot of John Masefield, the Poet Laureate, whose letters to Miss McCarthy about the production of his "Tragedy of Nan," are included in this instalment of her reminiscences.

Lillah McCarthy (right) as Nan in John Masefield's tragedy—a part in which she achieved a great artistic success.

possible, he gets them by walking over you. If he didn't, there would be no effect at all; and as it is, a great deal is lost, and what is saved goes altogether to his credit. This is really very bad of you, as there is nothing to prevent you from doing as you did on the first night, when you were very fine.

"What is wrong is that you do not hold your part against him. You take his tone; you take his speed; and you are so discouraged by the failure of the effects to come off that you plunge harder than ever and make things worse. Raina is never in a hurry, never frightened after her first pop into bed after the shots, always disdainful, patronizing, superior, queening it, until her collapse. Until then it never occurs to her for a moment to doubt her enormous moral superiority to Bluntschli, or Sergius's superiority. She likes him as she would like a pet dog. Her exclamation, 'Oh, it is useless to make YOU understand,' has no sense, no effect, unless she has been on her high horse all through. You have become Blunt[illegible]li's little pet, and Petkoff's little darling, and Katharine's naughty little girl; and the audience see what is meant only by a strained attention to the author's words, and are confused and disappointed because what they had read does not come



I have to thank you for my first success; and it is hard to find words for that; but I can at least bless and thank you for those many disappointments which this play brought to you before the Pioneers were kind. I hope I may have the honour of writing many other plays for you in times to come; but this first one, which you have made so beautiful to me, will always be a proud memory, even if you give them others a life as moving.

Believe me

Yours always very sincerely

John Masefield.

Part of a letter from John Masefield, in facsimile. The letter, which deals with "The Tragedy of Nan," is given in full in the text.

over the footlights except when Loraine is driving it over. You never pay the slightest attention to him; and when he looks at you, and finds you dreaming about something else—when you give him his cue in his own tone and ruin his reply—his jaw sets visibly in despair and he becomes a man of iron. If I were he, I would give a yell of rage, seize you by the ankles, and swing you round my head and let you fly into the pit, and rush screaming from the theatre.

"What Raina wants is the extremity of style—style—Comédie Française, Queen of Spain style. Do you hear, worthless wretch that you are?—STYLE.

"*Your* abandonment of the part is mere want of interest in it and susceptibility to what is suggested to you at the moment by what is going on on the stage. A shot excites you, Loraine's voice hurries you, Rosina's comedy amuses you, and immediately off you go miles away from the character—the sport of every accident and impression—and the receipts go down to fifty-nine pounds.

"Oh, give me that nice good Auriol Lee, who gets her teeth into her part and holds on, biting deeper and holding tighter every night.

"Thank Heaven it is post hour and I shall get this sent off before there is time to relent or flatter or give way to my wretched weakness of character.

"Demon—demon—demon!

"G. B. S."

But even a worm will turn, so I sent him the following in answer to his tirade:—

"Feb. 8th, 1908.

"DEAR MR. SHAW,

"Why wait till your anger has simmered down? I expected a letter from you Tuesday ten times stronger than the one I got this morning and have been disappointed that you should be so calm and gentle.

"You seem to have missed the whole point.

"Couldn't you see that my suddenly slacking off like that wakened the company with a start and for the first time they *acted?*

"For five weeks I have entirely carried that whole play; if I had acted as I did on Monday night 'Arms and the Man' would not have run a week. Now you know what the play can drop to without my work. However, this sudden awakening has done the company a great deal of good, and all this week I have had something to play against.

"What you say Loraine should do to me is what in effect I did to the company, and, finding themselves suddenly in the pit, they strained every nerve to get back to their former state. Your letter has given me courage to continue in my moral superiority and the company must live up to me if they can.

"For your own sake and for my sake I ask you to come again and sit where

the company cannot see you. Though you pulverize *me*, you act as a tonic on them.

"Yours very sincerely,

"LILLAH MCCARTHY."

Raina was a hard part and taxed my strength. After the run had finished I suffered from a bad chill and for medicine took a holiday and went off to Cornwall.

I had met Mr. Asquith a short time before this at a Foreign Office party. There was a great crowd of Ambassadors, Cabinet Ministers, and Foreign Royalties. It was a very brilliant scene. I was enjoying it all when Mr. Asquith came up to me and said he was glad we had met at last. I was somewhat gauche, and said I had never met him before, but he then said to me: "Well, all the world knows Lillah McCarthy." We both laughed at this, and took a mutual liking to one another. He then told me how much he had admired my acting. I sent him a line asking him to come and see me in Raina. He answered in his own handwriting; even in his busiest time—during the War—he always wrote to me in his own hand.

"March 3rd, 1908.

"DEAR MISS MCCARTHY,

"Thank you for your most kind letter. It would be a great relief and refreshment to escape from the things which beset me by day and night, and renew or revive the pleasure which I found years ago in seeing 'Arms and the Man.'

"I will take advantage of your kind offer, if I find it possible, next week.

"In any case, I shall hope some day to come and see you.

"Yours very sincerely,

"H. H. ASQUITH."

He came, and enjoyed it very much—at least, he said so. I think from then he saw me in every *rôle* I played, usually coming to the first night. It was at the same Foreign Office party that I first met Lloyd George.

During my time at the Court Theatre I had got to know John Masefield and his wife. People were beginning to talk about Masefield. A play of his, "The Campden Wonder," had been produced at the Court, and had created quite a sensation by its forcefulness, to say nothing of its unmitigated

The Earl and Countess of Oxford and Asquith in the garden of their riverside home. At Mrs. Asquith's request, Lillah McCarthy and her company gave a performance before the King and Queen at 10, *Downing Street, when Mr. Asquith was Prime Minister.*

gloom. While I was in Cornwall he wrote to me :—

"March 15th, 1908.

"I am glad you are nearly well again. We have felt very sorry for you, as the illness of an artist means so much to so many, and stops so many people's pleasures; it is a taking away of a part of the beauty of life. You say a lot of kind things about my writings. I wished I deserved them. I only hope my new play may be good enough to produce and that I may have the privilege of seeing you play the heroine.

"With kind regards from us both,

"Believe me,

"Yours very sincerely,

"JOHN MASEFIELD."

It was his tragedy of "Nan" he was then writing. When it was finished he sent "Nan" to me to read. I found it very beautiful. The part of Nan appealed to me very strongly, and I determined to play it. It was not a commercial proposition—what tragedy ever is? There were so many delays that I began to despair of ever putting it on. John Masefield wrote me :—

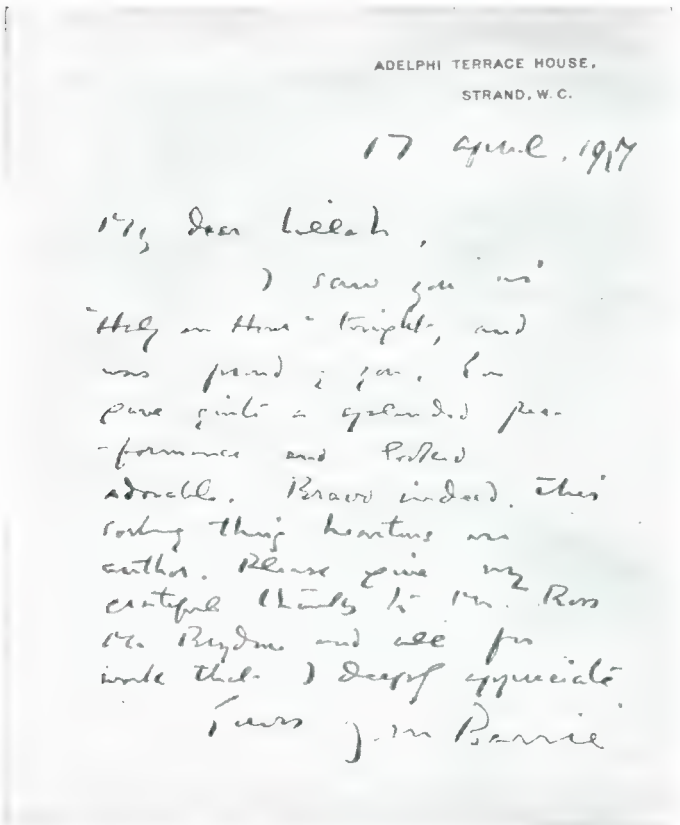
"April 15th, 1908.

"DEAR MISS MCCARTHY,

"You asked me about Nan's home some time ago. I fear I didn't give you very precise details. Her original home was in Broadway, in a cottage now destroyed. You will find the cottage described in one of William Morris's essays in 'Hopes and Fears for Art.' It was a very lovely little house, with some exquisite carving on the lintel of the door; a grey stone Cotswold house with the well-weathered stone slates on the roof. I saw it ten years ago, a little while before it was pulled down. It stood at the upper end of the village, the last house on the right, just where the road swings round to go up the hill towards the Fish Inn and Chipping Campden.

"Her home with the Pargetters was at Broad Oak on Severn, a tiny hamlet between Westbury and Newnham, on the very brink of the river, in the middle of its great curve. The house does not exist in reality. I built it for myself, rather further from the river bank than the little row of cottages, but still well away from the coach-road. Just below it there is a good place from which to see the awful sight of the tide.

"Nan herself is a blend of two country types known to me: one very charming and beautiful kind of character which always makes me think of the simple and gentle women's heads by Holbein; the other a coarser, more powerful, but rather sullen type, such as you may have met in Herefordshire. Some of



ADELPHI TERRACE HOUSE,
STRAND, W.C.

17 April, 1917

My dear Lilah,

I saw you in "Half an Hour" tonight, and was proud of you. You gave a splendid performance and looked adorable. Bravo indeed. This rotting thing haunts me earlier. Please give my cutest thanks to Mr. Ross & Rhythm and see for mine that I deeply appreciate yours

J. M. Barrie

A letter of appreciation from Sir James Barrie about Lillah McCarthy's performance in his play, "Half an Hour."

Sir James Barrie with some of the distinguished men who played the parts of cowboys in a film of his in which Lillah McCarthy had a "most thrilling part." Unfortunately the film was never publicly exhibited.

(*Left to right*) Lord Howard de Walden, William Archer, Sir James Barrie, G. K. Chesterton, and G. Bernard Shaw.

Millet's women have the look. There is something uncanny about it.

"If you wish to go to Broad Oak, there is a good hotel at Newnham, opposite the church. I forget its name; but the 'opposite the church' is direction enough. Be sure you go at full moon, when the tide is high. They will always be able to tell you the time the tide's coming.

"I hope that I may live to see you play Nan; but if I don't (for the play, I fear, has caused you many disappointments) I should like to thank you for all the trouble you have taken over it, and for the great encouragement you have given to me. I wish I were an artist, that I could paint you portraits of all the Pargetter household.

"With kind regards,

"Yours very sincerely,

"JOHN MASEFIELD."

I tried manager after manager, and at last persuaded the Pioneers to put it on for a Sunday evening performance, after which I arranged for a series of *matinées* at the Royalty in May, 1908. After the first performance John Masefield wrote to me:—

"26th May, 1908.

"MY DEAR NAN,

"You were very beautiful and wonderful on Sunday. It was a great honour to have my words so played and spoken. It was wonderful to see you giving my poor country girl all that intense and moving beauty. You brought her into touch with so many emotions and ideas which I had not suspected in her. You were all that I was trying for, and could not reach, when I was trying to give 'you' life. 'O, Nan, you be a beautiful actress.'

"I have to thank you for my first success; and it is hard to find words for that: but I can at least bless and thank you for those many disappointments which this play brought to you before the Pioneers were kind. I hope I may have

the honour of writing many other plays for you in times to come; but this first one, which you have made so beautiful to me, will always be a proud memory, even if you give those others life as moving.

"Believe me,

"Yours always very sincerely,

"JOHN MASEFIELD."

John has written much since "Nan"—many beautiful poems and stories. He has been made Poet Laureate. He has had honour after honour conferred on him, but he will never do anything better than "Nan," in my opinion. It is so sincere, so simple, great, with the starkness of Greek tragedy.

During the run Barrie wrote me:—

"DEAR MISS MCCARTHY,

"For some time I have been wishing you were in something of mine. At the first opportunity, it will not be my fault, but yours, if you are not. In any case let us have a talk soon, particularly if you are not going on autumns with the Savoy production.

"Yours truly,

"J. M. BARRIE."

We had our talk and I agreed to act in his play "What Every Woman Knows" when it was produced at the Duke of York's Theatre in the autumn of 1908. It ran a whole year and is a most human and humorous play, though my part, that of Lady Sybil Lazenby, was not a very interesting or inspiring one.

In March, 1909, I played Madge in John Galsworthy's play "Strife" at the Duke of York's. It was a most interesting play, dealing with very vital industrial problems. I had read the play during the winter, and wished to play Madge.

Galsworthy wrote to me: "Of course you are to play Madge if you will condescend to so small a part. It *is* small, but there are things to be done with it; and it will want nice close thinking over." Among the many letters of congratulation on my performance was this from Mr. Asquith, then Prime Minister:—

28th March, 1909.

"I must send you a line to say how greatly impressed I was by 'Strife' yesterday afternoon. It is one of the few English plays of our time, and I have never seen a performance more perfect in all points—acting, stage management, atmosphere.

"May I venture to add a word of personal congratulation on your Madge?—a figure that will live in one's memory.

"Yours very sincerely,

"H. H. ASQUITH."

I suppose I had been constantly overworking for years, not only at my profession but by running a flat in London as well as a house in the country; I also did a great deal of social work and visited, and went out to many parties, for an actress is a servant of the public and as such has to keep in the public eye. My health, which had always been splendid, broke down and I became really ill. I had to stay in bed for months and was not allowed to see a soul. I was told by the doctor that it would be at least six months before I could act again.

DURING my illness people were extraordinarily kind to me. G. B. S. and Mrs. Shaw, the Galsworthys, the Masefields, H. G. Wells and Jane his wife, Charles Shannon, Charles Ricketts, J. M. Barrie, H. H. Asquith, and other friends used constantly to call to make inquiries and wrote me the most heartening letters urging me to get well soon. Barrie used to come and see me very often. He used to stand outside my bedroom door, smoking his old pipe and telling me about the interesting things that were happening in the world while I was cut off from it. Surely such friendship is the finest tonic in the world, and so the end of January, 1910, saw me well enough to be moved to Brighton, and there I soon began to pick up strength, though I had to go about in a Bath chair! I met Arnold Bennett in Brighton for the first time, and since then we were staunch friends, a friendship which was then, and until his death, a great joy to me. From Brighton I went to Court Lodge and spent the spring and summer working in my garden, studying plays, reading, and getting thoroughly well.

I had given up the flat in Alexandra Court, and was now living in No. 17, John Street, Adelphi, over the recently built Little Theatre. It was a large, roomy flat, right on the top, with many, many stairs to climb. Mr. Asquith used to call the stairs "the ascent to Pisgah."

Miss Gertrude Kingston was the lessee of the Little Theatre. I arranged with her to take the theatre for six months. I opened on March 11th, 1911, with Schnitzler's "Anatol" episodes, while rehearsing Ibsen's "The Master Builder," in which I played Hilda Wangel.

Then we began rehearsing "Fanny's First Play," a play that Shaw wrote expressly for my management. He said we must have a financial success. Fanny ran for years, and I was able to pay back, with interest, to my kind benefactors, the money they had put up. There was great excitement over the play. We kept all the details of it a secret as much as we could,

not even announcing the author's name; in fact, it was produced anonymously. Shaw said he was writing a play that everyone would understand, "a simple little play." Yet that summer, when London was full of American visitors, I got many letters asking me what the play was all about, and what they were to think. I asked Shaw if he would write an explanatory note. His answer was: "If people cannot understand 'Fanny's First Play' they must be incapable of thought." It was a wonderful "first night," though it took place in the afternoon, to use an Irishism. All fashionable, literary, and artistic London came to it, and shouted with laughter. The play "went" from the rise of the curtain with a swing.

The audience was on the *qui vive* all the time. Shaw said in one of his letters, "Do everything to suggest the play is by Barrie. He might quite well be the author of the introduction and the epilogue. You can say with a good conscience that the author's name begins with a capital B." Which only goes to show what bad judges of our own work even the cleverest and best of us are. No sooner were the first few sentences spoken than every member of the audience recognized the Shavian touch. I played Margaret Knox; I found in her a great contrast to Hilda Wangel.

I was asked by Mrs. Asquith if I and my company would do a play at 10, Downing Street, to entertain their Majesties on the evening that the King and Queen were to dine with the Prime Minister. Only an hour, she said, as supper was to be served afterwards. After much cogitation the third act of "John Bull's Other Island" and "The Twelve Pound Look" were chosen.

The performance turned out a great success. We dressed at the Little Theatre—my understudy had to play Margaret—and drove to Downing Street. There were one hundred and sixty persons in the audience. The King and Queen came in exactly at ten. We played "John Bull" first, then changed quickly into the dresses for "The Twelve Pound Look." Both plays went splendidly. Their Majesties sent for the company and were most gracious. The Queen talked to me and said many charming things, and the King said he had enjoyed the performance. Then another quick change—this time into ordinary evening dress—and we joined the audience at supper in the dining-room.

Next day Mrs. Asquith wrote:—

"A good many empty sayings go flying about on social occasions where people have been amused and flattered, but I can truthfully say (and you know truth with me is a peculiarity more than a virtue!) that you had a very great, and to me unexpected (from the King and Queen I mean), success last night. Our K. and Q. are not without sense of humour and they both laughed and clapped the whole time. I need hardly say, with the exception of perhaps five or six obliged-to-be people, the rest of the audience were my own friends, and all, as you could see yourself, highly intelligent and *very* appreciating. I want you to send me the account of *everything*. No money ever repays in this world, but we all must live: my husband's work is inadequately paid, and I expect your work is inadequately paid, but I am a very simple person, and I write at once to tell you we shall be proud and happy to pay you all, and I can only add my husband and I thank you *very* much. Elizabeth will tell you that, though I have *au fond* a good temper, I get so dreadfully irritable at other people's want of enterprise and resource! I said to the King, 'You will see, sir, none of those blocks will follow us to the playroom!' and he said, 'Oh, how I suffer from people who can't stir! "Blocks" is a mild word to what I use inside my mind!'

"Margot Asquith."

A LITTLE later, when I was in management at the Savoy Theatre, Sir James Barrie was writing a cinema revue in which many of his friends were appearing. Gaby Deslys and Frank Tinney were to be the stars.

With Barrie I gave a supper party on the stage of the Savoy after the play, and as the guests arrived they were filmed, which was all part of the cinema.

The major part of the play was filmed at Elstree, but one scene, a cowboy scene, was done in Sussex, and the Cowboys were played by Lord Howard de Walden, William Archer, G. K. Chesterton, and George Bernard Shaw.

At the Savoy supper party we did four short plays in which all star actors and actresses played. The film was never shown to the public—but Lord Howard de Walden and Sir James Barrie often gave private shows of it. I played in one of the little plays as well as being hostess.

(Another instalment of Miss Lillah McCarthy's reminiscences will appear next month.)

HAPPILY MARRIED

OF course, also decidedly and unquestionably, the Lamports were happily married. One wants to get that quite clear at the beginning, in case anybody accuses one of being cynical at the end. Because one isn't being in the least cynical. For more than fifteen years they had shared Mr. Lamport's income and sustained themselves on Mrs. Lamport's housekeeping, and been inseparable through almost every adventure which can fall to a married couple during this period. One says "almost" like that, because it is a plain fact that their union had not been blessed or otherwise by the addition of children; but if anyone supposes that this had soured or saddened them, then anyone labouring under that impression would be completely wrong.

Sometimes, in such circumstances, there's a blank or a feeling of resentment which, originally directed against Providence, comes gradually to take on a more personal bias. Couples have been known to become bored with each other, angry with each other, and, in some cases, eventually to have dissolved a partnership uncemented by perambulators and school bills. Nothing of this kind disturbed the Lamports. Perhaps—well, as a matter of fact, there's no doubt of it—they were both a little dull. Perhaps they were both a little deficient in the modern notion that life is cheating you if it isn't constantly providing you with surprises and thrills. Anyhow, it never seems to have occurred to either of them that the partnership wasn't an entire success.

Mr. Lamport went to an office every day, and earned the income to which we have previously referred. Sometimes—not often, one admits, but just sometimes—little incidents took place during his nine hours' absence which varied its customarily unspeakable monotony. Perhaps he met an acquaintance in the Underground, or heard a story when he went out to lunch, or received some mildly topical intelligence from a partner or a client. And whenever any of these things happened, Mr. Lamport nodded and made a mental note of it, and said to himself: "I must tell Mabel about that when I get back to-night. I think it ought to interest her."

And going home again, in the Underground, he would rehearse his narrative in one or two forms—no, one won't say improving it exactly, but just checking it over and seeing that he'd got it straight. And as he walked from the station to his house, a close observer might have noted that he still muttered to himself, as a man may mutter who is preparing the exordium to an address.

And then he fished out his latchkey, and let himself into his own hall, and hung up his hat and overcoat, and popped his umbrella into the umbrella-stand, and—still muttering slightly—passed upstairs to the drawing-room.

"Hullo, dear," he would say. And as likely as not he leant over and kissed Mrs. Lamport somewhere on the top of her head. "What do you think——" he would proceed; but this was as far as he ever got.

Because it made absolutely no difference whether he had returned with an anecdote for her entertainment or not. Mrs. Lamport had *always* got an anecdote waiting for him. Either about what the cook had said that morning; or about what the charwoman had told her a little later; or about what the parlourmaid had confided in her later still. Or about the bathroom tap or the dining-room sash-cord.

But why continue the catalogue, when it should be quite obvious by now what Mrs. Lamport's stories were about? The real point which we're getting at is that on no actual occasion is there a record of her devoted husband ever having put over his own stuff at all. He would wait, he would listen, he would nod, he would agree, he would sympathize. But invariably, by the

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time that Mrs. Lamport had finished—and there is no record, either, of her ever hurrying herself—by the time she turned to him and said : " Well, Ernest ? And what have *you* been doing all day ? "—invariably, we repeat, when this critical moment at last arrived, Mr. Lamport found himself with only one answer to make.

Either, it seemed, he'd forgotten his anecdote, or else it no longer appeared in the least worth recalling.

" Nothing, dear," he would reply, contentedly and calmly. And as he said this, he believed it, and as he believed it, Mrs. Lamport accepted it in the same spirit of satisfaction and serenity. For the convention in this happy marriage—and let us again remind you that it had been extremely happy for more than fifteen years—had always been that Mrs. Lamport (or Mabel) should speak, and that Mr. Lamport (or Ernest) should do the listening.

On the twenty-seventh of April, then, these rather dull Lamports went forth to dine with some decidedly dull friends of theirs called Mr. and Mrs. Thrupp. Mr. Lamport returned from his office at the customary hour, entered his residence in the usual manner, passed upstairs into the drawing-room with the distinct determination to tell his wife how he had seen a man fall off a bicycle in King William Street, and was informed instead, and at considerable length, how Mrs. Lamport had secured competitive tenders for the dry-cleaning of her bedroom curtains.

" And anyone," said Mrs. Lamport, " who tells you that all these places charge the same, is simply talking nonsense. It just shows you, doesn't it, dear ? "

Mr. Lamport agreed that it just showed him.

" Of course," said Mrs. Lamport, " it's always an experiment, going somewhere new. I mean, of course, one shop isn't always exactly the same as another. What I mean is, sometimes there's quite a difference."

She enlarged on this thesis for some time, and Mr. Lamport listened very seriously, and nodded, and occasionally said : " Yes," or " Rather ! " or " I expect you're absolutely right." And then Mrs. Lamport returned from the general to the particular, and again repeated almost all her dialogue with the successful competitor. And then she submitted a number of sound but scarcely epoch-making observations on the subject of spring-cleaning in general, leading gradually back to a re-statement of her original decision. And finally she completed her evidence, and smiled kindly across the hearthrug, and said : " Well, Ernest ? Now, tell me ; what have *you* been doing all day ? "

Mr. Lamport opened his mouth, scratched his head, and cast vaguely round in his mind for something which he had now no real expectation of finding. Then he stopped scratching his head, and shook it.

" Nothing," he said. " That's to say, I—— No, dear. I mean, honestly, I can't really think of anything."

" Well," said Mrs. Lamport—and if this were the answer which she had been anticipating, then it's true enough that she had more than fifteen years' precedent to guide her ; " well," she said, " in that case, dear, perhaps you'd better go and get the car before you dress."

" What ? " said Mr. Lamport. " Are we dining out, then ? "

" Yes," said Mrs. Lamport. " With the Thrupps."

" With the Thrupps ? Oh, yes, of course. I remember. Right you are."

So then Mr. Lamport went downstairs again, and resumed his hat and overcoat, and walked round to Blagden's Garage, and pulled the dust-sheet off his car, and started up the engine, and—encouraged by various shouts and cries from Mr. Blagden's *employés*—backed out of his place, and turned round, and drove out through the straits by the petrol pumps, and drove back to his house, and switched off the engine, and went upstairs again—only further still, this time—

DENIS MACKAIL

Illustrated by GORDON NICOLL

and dressed himself in suitable clothes for a dinner party, and then strolled across the landing and informed Mrs. Lamport that he was ready.

"Just a moment," said Mrs. Lamport. "You go on down, dear, and I'll be with you before you know where you are." And so, about twelve minutes later, she appeared in full figgery, and Mr. Lamport got into the car, and Mrs. Lamport made as if to follow him, and then turned back and gave a long message to the housemaid about what the housemaid was to do should a parcel arrive from Cuffin's Stores; and thus at last she joined her husband on the front seat of their coach-built saloon, and they drove off together until presently they arrived at the Thrupps'.

And of the Thrupps' dinner-party it is more than enough to say that it was quite as dull and devoid of sparkle or incident as if it had been given either by the Lamports themselves or by the Moodies or the Haggards—the two other couples who completed the present gathering. At a quarter-past eleven the party was at an end. The Moodies drove off in a taxi. The Haggards drove off behind a chauffeur. The Lamports re-entered their coach-built saloon and drove off together.

In ten minutes they were home again. Mrs. Lamport got out, and Mr. Lamport watched her cross the pavement and saw her opening the front door with her own latchkey. And then he saw the door close and the hall light go on, and thus satisfied once more that all was well and perfectly normal, he let in the clutch, accelerated, and glided away towards Blagden's Garage.

Five hundred yards, perhaps, or thereabouts did he glide, and then—as a conscientious citizen should—he flung out his right arm before turning in past the petrol pumps. He also delivered a light tap on the horn-button, more as a matter of habit and precaution than because he expected any obstruction at this time of night. Only the next moment one of Mr. Blagden's

"But I don't want to be lost!" cried Betty. "I'm terrified! And you know, Dick, you promised me——!"

younger *employés* dashed into the fairway and put his hand up, and Mr. Lamport stopped rather abruptly behind a long, low, and exceedingly muddy touring car which completely blocked his further progress.

"Filling up, I suppose," he reflected, as he sat there with his own engine ticking over; for it was a feature of Blagden's Garage—in which it is far from unique—that cars requiring petrol pretty well choked a kind of bottle-neck leading to the main premises. Especially large cars like this.

But then it seemed to Mr. Lamport, on closer inspection, that the fellow in front of him wasn't filling up at all. And then it struck him that it was rather cool on the part of the fellow in front of him to do nothing, apparently, except stand there arguing with his passenger. So that the next thing that happened was that Mr. Lamport stepped out on to the greasy concrete with a view to representing his own interests in the matter, and advanced, and raised his opera-hat, and said, "Excuse me, sir."

But the other owner, who was also wearing a black coat and white muffler, didn't even look round.

"Look here, Betty," he was saying. "Do be sensible, for Heaven's sake. I can't help it if my darned axle's gone west. It's not my fault if we fetch up at a one-horse place where there's nothing I can hire. I know it's bad luck but surely you can sit here five minutes while I go and get something else. Surely——"

"But I don't want to be left," interrupted his companion or adversary. "I'm terrified, Dick. And you know you promised me——"

"Yes, yes; I know all that. But if you won't come with me——"

"How *can* I come with you? Just look at me!"

Mr. Lamport, who had just made the rather startling discovery that the ends of the other owner's legs were clothed not so much in black trousers and patent-leather shoes as in parti-coloured stockings and richly-rosetted pumps, now peered past him under the hood and was still further astonished to observe that his passenger—a remarkably pretty girl, so far as he could judge—was wearing a large, fluffy and extremely bright green wig. No wonder, he thought, she hesitated to walk about the streets if the rest of her attire were conceived on the same eccentric lines. He was all on her side, and honestly if there were the least justification for interposing between two absolute strangers, he'd have said as much. But there wasn't, of course, and he couldn't very well explain his own requirements until the other owner paid a little more attention to him. So that he waited—staring, it must be admitted, scarcely less frankly than Mr. Blagden's youthful *employé*—while the argument proceeded.

"I know, Betty; but be reasonable! Nobody knows who you are or where you are——"

"Oh! it isn't that, Dick. But, Dick—I'm sure George was watching us."

"Rubbish!" said the man. "He's far too stupid."

"Yes, I know, Dick. He is, isn't he? But, Dick——"

"Well? What is it now?"

"Oh, Dick, I can't help feeling awful about this! I can't help feeling that your car breaking down was a sort of *sign*——"

"Oh, don't be ridiculous, darling! You'll be all right as soon as we start again, and you can change as soon as we get there, and then——"

HERE the other owner, to whom, for some reason, Mr. Lamport had taken an increasing dislike as the moments slipped past, leant over the side of the muddy touring-car and became so confidential that only rumbles and mumbles reached the listener's ears. But it seemed that he was getting his way. The sounds of protest were fewer, the note of persuasion was growing stronger. He stood up suddenly, with an air of relief and accomplishment. And then he appeared to have an important afterthought.

"Your necklace, darling," he said. "Hadn't I better take care of it?"

"What?" asked the girl. "Why?"

"Well, darling—" here the other owner laughed in a manner which Mr. Lamport found distinctly unattractive—"it's only a precaution, of course. But we'll never get anywhere without it, and I'll feel much safer while you're alone if it's in my pocket. There! That's right, Betty. And the rest of the stuff?"

"Stuff, Dick? What do you mean?"

"All the other things you were wearing."

"Oh, I took them off, Dick. They're all in my suit-case, but I locked it up, and the key's in my little bag, and——"

"What!"

"Oh, I know what you said, Dick. But it seemed so silly to go driving about like an absolute Christmas-tree. Of course you shall have them as soon as we get there."

It struck Mr. Lamport that the other owner, for whom he still felt a growing antipathy, was anything but best pleased with this last intelligence. And again he was all on the girl's side, not only because he liked her face and her voice, but also because she had so obviously taken a sensible course. However, he couldn't very well say this, and what was more, he was now deprived of all opportunity of addressing the other owner at all. For at this point the other owner waved his hand and ran right out into the street and disappeared. So that Mr. Lamport was fain to make his next observation to the gaping lad in overalls.

"Can you shift her?" he asked, adopting the rather manly tone which he was accustomed to use in such circumstances. "I want to get in."

"Eh?" said the gaping lad, as he reluctantly removed his gaze from the green wig. "Beg pardon, sir? No, I don't see as I can—not till my mate comes along. She's all chewed up proper, and look what she weighs!"

"But if I help?" suggested Mr. Lamport; because even if he dirtied his hands, it would be better than waiting indefinitely.

"Well, I dunno, sir. Of course, if the young lady was to get out. . . ."

Mr. Lamport raised his opera-hat again.

The girl got out, revealing a great deal of stocking and a very small quantity of flounced skirt.

"Excuse me," he said, with extreme civility. "But I want to put my car away, and I think perhaps we could manage to move yours if——"

"Oh!" said the girl. "You don't want me to get out, do you?"

"Well," said Mr. Lamport, "if you wouldn't mind, just for a moment. Or look here," he added, as the girl still stared at him; "if—I mean to say, if you're afraid of getting cold, why not get into mine?"

This was as far as his shyness allowed him to go in alluding to her unusual costume, but the suggestion seemed quite a success.

"I see," said the girl. "Thanks awfully. I suppose I'd better. I mean, it's very good of you. You see——"

"Yes?"

"Nothing," said the girl. But she got out, revealing a great deal of pink stocking as she did so, and a very small quantity of flounced skirt, and a wrap which seemed rather inadequate as a covering for either. And Mr. Lamport scowled at the gaping lad so as to discourage his obvious intention of winking, and took over the suit-case with which the girl was struggling, and ushered her to his own car, and helped her in, and put the suit-case beside her, and bowed, and closed the door, and returned to the bottle-neck.

"Now, then," he said, in the same manly tone. And the lad in overalls ran off and came back with a powerful jack on wheels, and the two of them sweated and strained together, and tugged and heaved, but it was quite apparent in a very short time that the task was going to be beyond them. The car was far too heavy, the bottle-neck far too long and constricted.

"I'm afraid," said Mr. Lamport, wiping his forehead, "we shall have to give it up."

The lad in overalls hastened to agree. "But," he added, "it'll be all right when my mate gets back with the breakdown bus. We'll 'ave 'er out of the way in no time then, and I'll see your car's put away all proper, sir."

Indeed, it seemed the only solution. Not that Mr. Lamport ever relished the notion of other hands putting his saloon to bed—and, besides, would they remember about the dust-sheet?—but it was certainly high time that he got to bed himself.

"Thanks," he said, in his manly tone. "Well, good night." And he was on the point of leaving Blagden's Garage altogether, when he suddenly noticed that his side-lights were still burning. He deflected his course, he opened the offside front door, he began fumbling for the switch.

"I say!" said a voice from the back seat.

MR. LAMPORT stood up so abruptly that his opera-hat went spinning into the scuttle.

"I beg your pardon," he apologized. "I'm afraid I'd forgotten—I mean, I'm just going off, and I thought—— No," he interrupted himself; "please don't move. I mean, your—your friend'll be back in a moment, won't he? Do stay where you are."

"You're—you're awfully kind," said the girl in the green wig.

"Not at all," said Mr. Lamport, gallantly, as he started fumbling for his hat.

"Oh!" said the girl, so piercingly that he came bouncing up again. "But you don't realize! Oh, I'm so worried suddenly. Oh, I *must* talk to someone!"

"Eh?" said Mr. Lamport, peering at her.

"Such a mess!" said the girl.

"Where?" asked Mr. Lamport.

"No, please listen to me. You don't know—but the most awful thing's just happened."

"What?" asked Mr. Lamport.

"Oh, dear. I believe I've changed my mind again. Oh, dear, I wish I knew whether I've changed my mind or not."

Mr. Lamport stared at her.

"You mean you'd rather—er—wait somewhere else?" he suggested.

"No, no! And you're not to leave me! Please! I need you—oh, terribly!"

"Me?" said Mr. Lamport, in considerable bewilderment.

"Yes. Listen. I must tell you. You saw that man who was here just now? Oh, dear—I'm only telling you this because I feel quite mad suddenly; but we—we were running away!"

"Running away?" said Mr. Lamport.

"Yes; and I really hardly know him, but he's terribly attractive, and I think—well, I think he rushed me rather. And then I was sorry for him because he was in an awful hole. Money, you know. And so we all went to this dance—I made him take me, and George was furious——"

"George?" said Mr. Lamport, faintly.

"Oh, don't interrupt!" cried the girl. "Well, you see, I'm practically engaged to George, too, and that's another thing that makes it so awkward. Only Dick kept laughing at him, and then—well, I suppose I was fascinated or something—and I put all my jewels on, and Dick's going to sell them and we're going to get married and go abroad. Only now—suddenly. . . ."

In the dim light from the illuminated petrol-pumps Mr. Lamport saw the girl's

"Go on!" she was screaming. "I told you not to stop. Can't you see it's George. Oh, please go on!"

face crumple and twist, and once more—though it was more impossible than ever to digest her extraordinary story—he was all on her side. And yet, of course, it still had nothing to do with him. And yet, of course, he was quite late enough already. And yet, of course ——

"Look here," he said, abruptly, "what do you want *me* to do?"

"You?" The girl gazed back at him. Shook her head. Tried to smile. Suddenly leant forward and gripped him by the shoulder.

"Listen!" she said. "It's not far—only just beyond Richmond—but you do look so kind. I—I thought so the second I saw you. And so safe. I know I can trust you,

and I'm in your car, anyhow. Will you—please ? "

" Eh ? " said Mr. Lamport—flattered, there's no doubt, but still a good deal confused. " Will I what ? "

" Take me there. Now. At once. You will, won't you ? "

" Yes, but—I mean, where ? "

" Home ! " said the girl, now positively shaking him. " Can't you understand ? I want to go home. Before Dick gets back. Before anyone finds out. Before—— Oh, quickly—please ! "

Mr. Lamport slid on to the seat, closed the door, switched on the ignition and started the engine. He even manœuvred his coach-built saloon until he had turned it right round, and was out again in the main road. Then the unaccountable impulse, or the unaccountable weakness, or the unaccountable madness which had brought him so far suddenly seemed to leave him, and he pulled up with a jerk.

" Go on ! " cried the girl behind him.

" Yes, but look here," he protested. " I mean to say——"

" What ? "

" Well, of course I quite see your point. I mean, I didn't like the look of that fellow at all. I think you're quite right, I mean, but——"

Well, the truth was that, although up to this point the whole chain of adventures, however unusual, had been quite unavoidable, and though up to this point a distinct fraction of Mr. Lamport's brain had been translating them into the story which he proposed to relate as soon as he got home, this last development was going a little beyond anything that he had bargained for. Already Mabel would be wondering where he was, and so far it would be perfectly easy to explain ; but if he set off, at this time of night, alone with a pretty young woman in fancy dress and drove all the way to Richmond and back—well, how was that going to sound when he eventually got home ? No, no ; it was impossible. Of course he'd do anything that he could, but that was asking a bit too much. If only, for instance, he could get the girl into a taxi. Of course he'd be delighted to lend her the fare—all right, give it to her, even—only——

" Look here," he stammered, as his eyes searched for a wandering cab and one hand started moving towards his note-case. " Look here—you see, the fact is——"

Another very strange thing happened. With a roar and a squeak a little two-

seater came slithering over towards Mr. Lamport's saloon, and stopped only a yard or two away. But the really strange part was that the driver, as Mr. Lamport could hardly fail to be aware—and why? Because he was now standing up and gesticulating and yelling—was dressed in a loose white suit and a large ruff and a series of big black pompons. And: "Hi!" shrieked this amazing driver. "Wait!" he bellowed. "Stop!" he roared. "Listen!" he bawled. "I've got something to tell you. It's important!"

And certainly his manner suggested that he, at any rate, attached extreme importance to whatever he was so anxious to impart. Only the strangest thing of all was that the girl behind Mr. Lamport was absolutely belabouring her courteous companion. Hitting him with her fists and crying loudly

The girl screamed, and the pierrot gasped, for there were two necklaces dangling from his hand, and one was a coloured rope of pearls.

in his ears. "Go on!" she was screaming. "I told you not to stop. I knew this would happen. Oh, *please* go on! Can't you see it's George?"

And Mr. Lamport did go on. If he'd had time to think—— But that was just what he hadn't got. His hands and feet obeyed that urgent outcry long before his reason could attempt to cope with it. The saloon shot away, the girl stopped pounding him; they were round the corner—as he could see in his little driving-mirror—while the passionate pierrot still tugged and jerked at his own gear-lever. Never in all the years that he had owned a licence had Mr. Lamport stepped on the gas with such reckless vehemence. And still the new impulse kept him at it. And still his reason lagged helplessly behind.

"Where?" he gasped over his shoulder.

"Anywhere!" cried his passenger. "I can't face him. I can't explain to him. Oh, you're the only one I feel safe with! Faster!"

AND Mr. Lamport went faster, and took some dangerous crossroads with a toot from his horn but no trace of slackening in his speed. And again he glanced in the driving-mirror, and there was the little two-seater still plunging after him, and another, larger car—unless he were very much mistaken—fairly roaring up beside the two-seater.

"What's happening?" he panted. "Sit down! I can't see."

For suddenly the driving-mirror held nothing but the reflection of a green wig, bouncing up and down as the passenger knelt on the back seat.

"It's both of them!" she was shouting. "Oh, faster, please! Oh, this is awful! Oh, it's Dick, too, and he's going to catch us! Oh, look what he's gone and hired!"

But Mr. Lamport couldn't look. Nor, as his accelerator-pedal reached the limit of its travel, could he get another ounce out of his suffering and astonished engine. The saloon bucketed over another cross-road, this time without even tooting, but he could hear a throbbing as the larger of his pursuers still gained on him; and then, from the tail of his right eye, he caught sight of an enormous bonnet; and then the big limousine was level; and then it was passing him, while a frantic figure leant from its window and waved and yelled. And then—and at this moment it was perhaps fortunate that Mr. Lamport's reason, or part of it, suddenly returned to him—it took the crown of the narrowing street, and slowed down and stopped dead. And Mr. Lamport clapped on his own efficient brakes and tried to reverse. And a blast from behind warned him that he was penned in there, also. So that he realized that he was trapped, and since there was nothing else whatsoever that he could do, he just sat where he was, wondering what on earth had taken possession of him during the last three minutes, and wondering still more what appalling entanglement was about to seize hold of him next.

"Look here!" shouted he of the red rosettes, leaping out into the roadway. And: "Hi!" bawled the pierrot, bounding from his two-seater. They met; they seemed thunderstruck; they turned like one impassioned question-mark on the intensely respectable Mr. Lamport.

"What——" they began. "Who——"

"It's all right," murmured the girl, and she actually patted Mr. Lamport's back. "It's all right," she repeated, thrusting her green mop out of the window. "This gentleman," she said, "is very kindly taking me home. Yes, Dick," she added, meaningly; "I said 'Home.' Because," she said—and even Mr. Lamport could feel the effort to control herself; "because," said she, "I've been wicked and mad and quite unforgivable, but it *was* a sign, Dick; I just know it, and I'm not going on. And as for you, George," resumed this temperamental young lady, "you needn't think I'll thank you for chasing me about like that. No gentleman," she began, haughtily, "and no friend of mine——"

But the pierrot cut her short with an indignant cry.

"I *wasn't* chasing you," he protested. "At least, I wasn't until I suddenly saw your wig just now. But don't you realize what's happened, Betty? There was a burglar at that dance. Lady Buckley went up to her bedroom, and somebody'd gone off with all her pearls. Well, don't you understand? There was only one fellow who'd left, and I'd seen him sneak out, and I meant to catch him. I'd no idea you'd gone too, but the butler saw his car go off, and a lot of other people noticed it because of the row it was making, and then somebody saw it go into that garage, and then—my gosh, Betty—I saw *you*, and——"

"And you followed me. Exactly. Well, I tell you I'm going home."

"Yes, but, Betty——"

"Home," repeated Mr. Lamport's passenger. And: "Dick!" she said, though not without a tremor; "will you please give me back my necklace?"

The man in the black overcoat hesitated, shrugged his shoulders, and made a sardonic bow.

"All right, my dear," he said. "A woman's privilege, what? Have it your own way. Here you are."

And his hand went into his pocket and came out again.

"There!" he said. "Take it."

And the girl screamed, and the pierrot gasped, and even Mr. Lamport made a sudden, uncontrollable movement. For there were two necklaces dangling from his hand, and one was a colossal rope of pearls.

"Here!" cried the pierrot, snatching at them both. And the man in the black overcoat uttered a poignant oath, and started bolting for the big limousine. And the pierrot dashed after him, and the girl hurled herself and her suit-case out of Mr. Lamport's saloon and made a grab at one of the black pompons. And then, so it seemed, there was a sharp smack, as of a fist meeting a face, and the pierrot was lying in the roadway, and the girl was bending over him addressing him as darling George, and the big limousine was roaring away in the distance.

And as Mr. Lamport continued to stare, the pierrot sat up and—unless Mr. Lamport were again very much mistaken—the girl kissed him. And then she seemed to be crying. And then—there was little or no doubt of this—he seemed to be kissing her. And then they both got into the two-seater, still without so much as glancing at the remaining spectator, and it backed, and it swung round, and it drove away.

"Well!" said Mr. Lamport to himself. "I must say!"

But his services were quite manifestly no longer required, and he drove back to Blagden's Garage, and the bottle-neck was now clear, and he drove through to his usual stand, and switched off his lights and his engine, and draped the dust-sheet over his saloon, and replaced his opera-hat, and glanced at his watch.

"Less than half an hour," he muttered. "Well, I must say!"

But he'd certainly got something to tell Mabel this time, and even on the short sharp walk which took him back to his house he had time to rehearse at least six alternative openings. Mabel, of course, would want to know why he had been so long, and then he'd say ——

Well, wait a minute, though. That girl wanted a bit of handling, even with Mabel, so perhaps it would be better ——

Or supposing . . .

Or again . . .

He still hadn't quite solved the problem as he let himself in with his latchkey, removed his hat and coat, and passed upstairs to the second floor. Yet the story was now seething so violently in his system that it would just have to come tumbling out anyhow. And even if Mabel were annoyed —— Well, dash it all, what had she got to be annoyed about? Nothing. The whole thing had been forced on him from beginning to end, he'd done nothing that anybody could avoid, and here he was home again, crammed with adventures, but only too willing to come clean with every solitary detail.

HE opened his wife's bedroom door.

"I say——" he began.

"What?" interrupted Mrs. Lamport, swinging round on the stool in front of her dressing-table. "Oh, it's you, is it, Ernest? Where've you been all this time?"

Mr. Lamport drew in a deep breath.

"Not that you can do anything to-night," his wife continued, "because, of course they've all gone to bed. But I must say I think you'll have to speak to Agnes about it, because really it's so terribly wasteful. Fortunately," said Mrs. Lamport, "I happened to look down the kitchen stairs—well, as a matter of fact, I was wondering if that parcel had come—and, would you believe it, she'd left the light burning in the scullery! Well, of course I said to myself. . . ."

Mr. Lamport's deep breath oozed away, and his respiration gradually became normal.

"—because," his wife was saying, five minutes later, "it isn't so much the expense, really, and of course she's quite a good cook, but at the same time. . . ."

Buzz, buzz, buzz—and now Mr. Lamport was sitting on the *chaise-longue*, still listening attentively.

"—it's the kind of thing, I mean, that one oughtn't to overlook, because if one doesn't do something about it, well, where is one? I mean, I remember when I was at home in the old days. . . ."

Suddenly Mr. Lamport looked up. The voice had stopped at last, and he felt he ought to say something.

"All right, dear," he said. "I quite agree."

"I'm so glad," said Mrs. Lamport. "And of course I'll remind you."

"Thank you," said Mr. Lamport. He rose and started moving towards the door.

"Oh, Ernest!"

"Yes, dear?"

"I nearly forgot to ask you. Were *you* doing anything?"

Mr. Lamport paused, frowned, felt there might have been something, racked his memory, failed to find it, and shook his head.

"No, dear," he said, calmly and contentedly. "Nothing."

What's that? You don't believe it? But we told you at the beginning that the Lamports were happily married.

TAKING CHANCES

By

EDWARD D. DICKINSON

Illustrated by FRED W. PURVIS

ROBIN GOODHEY should have been a very happy young man. He still had two months of his leave to go; the weather seemed permanently set fair; he had become engaged to a charming girl who seemed to think that living in the wilds with him was infinitely preferable to any other existence in the world; he had a good job, and excellent prospects; he had splendid health; and finally, he was due that very morning to journey to the fair county of Devon, there to spend a fortnight with his *fiancée* and Colonel Plounder, her excellent father. In six weeks' time he was to be married, and yet——

He actually woke feeling everything was perfectly right and in its proper place. He could see with one sleepy eye that the sun was still shining. And then his second sleepy eye opened. It lighted immediately on the yellow paper cover of a fat little book that was lying on the table by his bed, and he remembered.

"Damn 'W. G.'!" said Robin Goodhey.

It all came back to him with distressing clarity, but all the same he fished the letter out from its resting place in his note-book and studied it once more to make quite certain that there hadn't been a mistake.

"Darling," it began, and led off most promisingly with two pages of unblushing happiness that gave him an uncomfortable feeling that he was only about one-tenth the kind of man she apparently thought him to be. Then, just at the beginning of the third page, there came the snag, and he was painfully aware that Daphne should never have done it.

"*Dearest,*" she wrote, "*I'm afraid I've been prevaricating to Daddy; in other words, I've been lying like blazes, and all about you. You see, he was a bit more hot and bothered than I cared to tell you at the time when I broke the news about our engagement, and confessed that you were dragging me off to East Africa in a few weeks, and that I wouldn't be home again for five years. It must have been rather a blow coming 'sudden like' (that's Devonshire), so I had to soften it as much as possible, and the only way I could do that was by saying you were a most frightfully keen cricketer. I was careful to say that you weren't much good—and that one bit is true, isn't it, darling?—but I'm afraid I emphasized the frightful keenness. I know I should have warned you a week ago, but I've been putting it off, so you'll have to mug up cricket on the way down, because Daddy will want to talk 'it' after dinner. He can't talk anything else much. Fearfully sorry, darling, and bitterly repentant, but I couldn't help myself, now could I?*"

Then followed the usual and most satisfactory farewells, and, finally, three postscripts.

"*PS. You'll find all about everything in 'Wisden's.*'

"PPS. Please make sure you know plenty about 'W. G.' He's Daddy's first and foremost hero.

"PPPS. There's no real need to worry. The last match of the season is on Saturday, and the team's full up, so you won't be expected to play!"

There was the snag in all its horror. There was the blight on his otherwise happy prospects of a glorious fourteen days. "That one bit" was certainly true enough, but it wasn't strong enough. He was no earthly good at all, and what's more he didn't want to be. He admitted, of course, that cricket was a magnificent game, but it didn't happen to appeal to him. He hadn't played since he had been at school, and even then the summer had always been a period of pleasantly warm waiting between past and future Rugger seasons. And he knew that, really and truly, she wasn't sorry in the least. Of course, in the first place, as she said, she had started the story to make things easy for the old boy, but all the elaboration —the "frightfully keen" part of the business—was nothing but sheer wickedness. He could see her telling the tale, looking as innocent as pie until you happened to notice the little dancing twinkle at the back of her eyes.

She was the naughtiest of adorable little demons, and that evening she would undoubtedly enjoy herself to the point of bursting, sitting demurely by while he strove to talk with some kind of intelligence about "W. G." Of course, he couldn't let her down. Colonel Plounder's feelings had to be studied, but all the same it would be a series of nerve-racking experiences. He felt a bit nervous before; anybody would at the prospect of a first meeting with the man who was going to be a fellow's father-in-law; but now it was a thousand times worse. It was the devil!

Still, there was nothing to do but make the best of it and—study "Wisden"; while dressing, at breakfast, and most of the way down in the train.

He was so immersed at the breakfast table that his elderly waiter had to go through the list of edibles twice before he took any notice at all, and when he did answer his reply took the form of a question.

"How many runs," he demanded, "did Jack Hobbs make during the season of nineteen-twenty-two?"

The waiter appeared delighted, though surprised. His professional shell of cold superiority fell off him on the spot.

"Now, sir," he said. "Let me think. Nineteen-twenty-two?"

"Do you know?" asked Robin in alarm. "I mean without looking at the book or anything?"

"Of course, sir," said the old waiter proudly. "That is, if you give me a minute. Nineteen-twenty-two?"

"I'll take," announced Robin, "grape fruit, and porridge, and two poached eggs on toast, and marmalade, and more toast and coffee, please."

"I beg your pardon, sir," stammered the waiter. "I—I thought——"

"I'm sorry," said Robin. "I'm afraid I misled you. I don't want to know in the least, really. All I want is my breakfast and a very big revolver with two chambers loaded, in case I miss myself with the first one."

DAPHNE met him at the station, but not quite in the state of bubbling anticipation that he had expected. She was indeed a trifle subdued for her, and listened to the objections that followed his ardent greetings with every appearance of repentance.

"I'm not going to let you down, of course," he ended. "But it's going to be an awful job keeping up a sparkling conversation about 'W. G.' for fourteen blinking days and fourteen blinking nights."

"It's going to be worse than that, darling," she said, in a very small voice.

He started so violently that the little two-seater nearly dived headlong through a handy gate and went home *viâ* the fields.

"What do you mean?" he demanded in alarm. "How can it be worse?"

For safety's sake she pulled up by the side of the road until the news was broken.

"It's all that ridiculous old Mrs. Wimper at the Mill," she explained. "She's having twins again—or so they expect—and last time she was simply frightfully bad."

"I'm sorry," said Robin, gaping a little. "I may be slow, but I'm afraid I don't follow."

"Don't be sarcastic," she begged him. "I haven't finished yet, and you know I haven't. You see, Dr. Bramble is one of Daddy's hardiest stand-bys, but he says that if the happy event hasn't happened—and, being Mrs. Wimper, it simply won't have—he'll have to hang about on the doorstep all the afternoon; so he's cried off, and"—she dropped her voice to a dramatic whisper—"Daddy is really very bucked about it, although of course he pretends to be sorry, because now he can offer you a place."

The tanned complexion of the young builder of empires took on a noticeably paler shade.

"Well," he said, "now you have put your foot bang into the middle of things. You

know I can't play a stroke. The first ball I get, your father will realize you've been filling him up with a pack of lies, and my name will be mud for ever. There's only one thing to do 'Fess up. Say it was all a joke, and bow our heads to the storm."

It was Daphne's turn to be alarmed. "Oh, no!" she cried. "We mustn't do that. You've simply got to be a cricketer until Daddy's used to the idea of you. Once you get through the fortnight we sha'n't have to worry for another five years, and by that time, with any luck, he won't care twopence whether you play or not."

"There's something in that," Robin agreed. "But once he gets me on the field I'm lost. So what are you going to do about it? I can't refuse to play."

Daphne turned on her meekest and most persuasive voice. "Darling," she said, "there is a nice, simple way out. I've brought it with me. It's in my bag."

He looked at her suspiciously. "Good God! What's the bright idea this time?"

In reply she reached for her handbag, opened it, and held up something for his inspection.

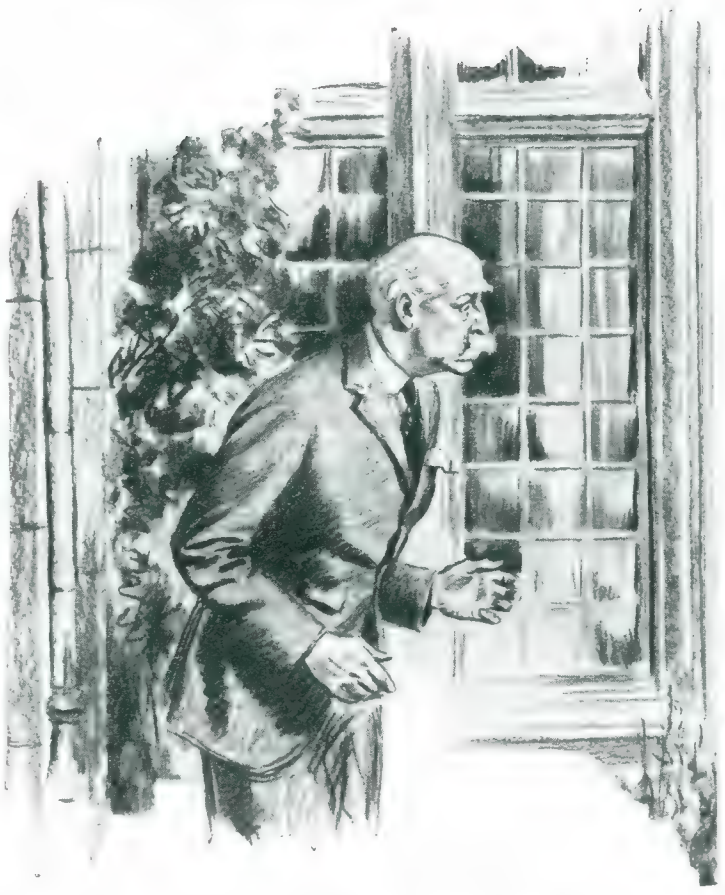
"A bandage," she explained triumphantly, but perhaps a little nervously.

"What's that for?" he demanded.

"You," she said. "Isn't it simply rotten luck? You've sprained your wrist."

Robin Goodbey was torn between admiration and annoyance. "You certainly think of everything," he had to admit. "But how long does a sprain last? I want to play tennis with you."

"It wouldn't have to be a bad one," Daphne urged, and to make quite certain unpinned the bandage with a view to instant action. "Daddy thinks tennis is only a sort of pat-ball game. He wouldn't be a bit surprised if you could play it with both wrists sprained."



Robin found himself confronting a military-looking old gentleman who stared at the recently bandaged wrist with a look of pained amazement.

He waggled his head in hopeless resignation.

"Oh, go on," he said. "Tie me up. We've taken a few chances already; we might just as well take a few more."

She took him at his word before he had time to change his mind.

"There," she said, giving the completed bandage a final pat, and taking the wheel of the little car once more. "That looks bad enough for anything, and for Heaven's sake don't forget to shake hands with your left hand."

recently bandaged wrist with a look of pained amazement that even his good manners were unable to conceal. With a supreme effort, however, he managed to keep all mention of it out of the first few sentences of his conversation.

"This is Robin, Daddy," suggested Daphne, helpfully, and, answering a sly poke, that highly tried young man obediently held out his left hand.

"Is it, by Jove?" demanded Colonel Plounder, looking at him very hard. "So you're the young fellow who proposes to take my daughter off my hands? Sorry you're working out in the wilds, but can't be helped, I suppose. I did just the same to her dear mother. Took her off to the North-West Frontier, and her old dad

Ten minutes later they pulled up at the front door of The Willows—so called from the association of that tree with the king of summer games—and Robin Goodhey found himself confronting a military-looking old gentleman with a shiny bald head and fierce white moustaches, who stared at the

threatened to shoot me when I told him where we were going. Did it all the same. So would you, by the look of you, so I won't waste my breath talking about shot-guns or dog-whips, though I feel like it, mind you. Come in, my dear boy, and have a drink."

"Bit too early in the day for me, sir," said Robin, although a double whisky was exactly what he needed most.

"So it is for me," agreed the Colonel heartily. "Damn' good rule; no drinking before sundown. Still, you know, as it's a bit of an occasion to-day, I think perhaps we might relax a little. Let me take your bag; you've got as much as you can carry with your coat and that tennis racquet," and then at last, coming to the point with a burst: "You've crocked your arm, haven't you?"

"Nothing much," said Robin, blushing violently. "Only strained it a bit."

"Be all right to-morrow?" demanded the Colonel.

"Sprained, you told me," broke in Daphne quite unblushingly, "not strained."

"Er—slightly sprained," stammered the young man, making faces at her behind her unconscious father's back. "Nothing much the matter. Quite fit in three or four days."

"But not to-morrow?" demanded Colonel Plounder once again. "Last match of the season to-morrow, you know. I was hoping you might be able to turn out. Someone failed me yesterday. I'm one short."

"I'm most awfully sorry, sir," said Robin. "I should have loved to have got one game before sailing, but I'm afraid it's out of the question for a day or so."

His future father-in-law plumped down the bag and produced drinks with great alacrity.

"Of course, I won't press you," he said. "Daphne has told me how keen you are, and I know if you felt anywhere near fit you'd have jumped at it. I'm at my wits' end, though. It's very difficult to get the farmers to turn out at this time of the year."

Daphne sought to improve the occasion.

"I wonder," she suggested sweetly, "if your wrist would be strong enough to stand a couple of sets of tennis by Monday?"

"Tennis," snorted her father. "That's different. He could probably play about at tennis to-morrow if he wanted to, but I'm sure he doesn't." He turned to Robin, becoming confidential.

"You know, Daphne has never been so fond of cricket as I could have wished, and I don't mind confessing now I was always afraid she might want to marry some namby-pamby fellow who'd never played the game in his life. I don't suppose I could have said anything, but it would have been a blow. I think there must be something wrong with a young fellow's moral make-up if he doesn't play cricket. I don't mind how badly he plays, but, dammit, he must be keen. It was a load off my mind when she told me you often rode fifty miles for a game."

Robin caught his *fiancée's* eye, and glowered sombrely, but before he had time to reply, Colonel Plounder had swallowed his drink and was on his feet again.

"I know you two young people will have a lot to say to each other, and I have plenty to do, so now I'll excuse you both, and Daphne can show you the garden. Half-past seven, dinner, I'm looking forward to a good yarn with you afterwards, Robin. I haven't had a chat with a really keen cricketer for months——"

THE clock was striking twelve when Robin said "good night" to his host at his bedroom door, and collapsed weakly into a chair. He was tired out with the strain of his recent ordeal, but that was only the least of his troubles. Something had happened to put him in such a panic that he even contemplated, quite seriously, instant and silent flight. He wished devoutly that he had the chance of imparting to Daphne his present thoughts regarding her, and almost immediately his wish was granted, for there came a most discreet knocking at the door.

"Come in," he said, and Daphne's face popped round, with a finger to her lips.

"I say," she whispered, "are you receiving callers? I'm coming in, then, but for God's sake don't raise your voice or Daddy might hear, and he'd have a fit." She perched herself on his knee. "How did it go, after I came away? You did simply splendidly earlier on."

"All right," said Robin gloomily.

She looked at him with surprise. "Why the black-dog then, darling?" she demanded. "Not too frightfully fed up with me?"

He took her by her slim shoulders. "Yes," he said. "I am. You've landed me so deep in the mud, there's no digging me out. Your Dad had an inspiration about eleven o'clock. He rang up the miserable old parson who usually umpires, and got him to say he'd play, in spite of his eighty-two odd summers, and the rheumatics in both knees. You see the natural sequence of that, don't you? I'm umpiring! Curse your beautiful sky-blue eyes and everything, sweetheart. . . . I'm umpiring!"

The afternoon had been one long agony for Robin Goodhey. A torment of concentration, taking six miserable little white

"I'm frightfully fed up with you, darling," he said. "You've landed me so deep in the mud, there's no digging me out."

pebbles one by one out of his trousers pocket and transferring them into his coat pocket, and then putting them all back again. Not once, mind you, but dozens of times.

He was feeling despondent also, because Daphne hadn't been near the ground the whole afternoon. After she had dropped her father and himself at the gate, she had buzzed off in the little car with some vague remark that she was going to inquire after poor dear Mrs. Wimper, and would be back in a minute or two. That was the last he'd seen of her, and he felt neglected. On the whole, however, he had been almost unbelievably lucky. His fellow-sufferer in a white coat had just come across to compare watches and remark: "Last over, I suppose," in a very sad voice. "Oh, rather," said Robin in tones that strove unsuccessfully to be equally sorrowful. Yes, he had certainly been lucky. Here was the last over; actually the very last blessed over, and not one single decision had he been called upon to make. He began to feel actually that he had been enjoying himself. Cricket was, after all, a fine game, and this afternoon a pretty exciting one. Here they were with only six more balls to go, and the other side had one more wicket to fall and two more runs to make. Excitement if you like! It was worth the money alone watching that good old sportsman, Colonel Plounder, preparing to deliver the first ball of such a momentous over, turning his fingers round the seam in such a complicated way that Robin felt a "break" of devilish cunning must assuredly ensue. Oh, cricket was a great game; and, considering everything, he was a great umpire, and Daphne really ought to have put in an appearance before this, even if *she* wasn't keen. His eyes strayed to the gate just in time to catch the red splash of her jaunty little hat, as she swung her two-seater into the field. There she was, bless her——

"How's that?" Colonel Plounder appealed. A confident, parade-ground bellow of an appeal.

Robin came back to earth with a bang. He looked about him helplessly, with his mouth a little open, finding the eyes of all men fixed on him with an awful intensity; wishing devoutly that he might dwindle quietly away and disappear. His voice, when he did produce it, was nothing more than an undignified squeak.

"I—er," he stammered at last. "I—I'm afraid I don't know what you're appealing for. I wasn't looking."

"Good God!" said Colonel Plounder.

There was an awkward silence, and then conversation became general, including everybody on the field except Robin.

"I really should go out," announced the batsman. "I hit it hard, you know."

"'E did that, sir," agreed the wicket-keeper, who had well and truly caught it.

"No, no," insisted the Colonel; "not to be thought of, my dear fellow. It's all in the game.

"But we're beaten fairly and squarely," argued the batsman. "I mean, if I do manage to knock off the runs before the end of the over, it's a pretty rotten way of winning and all that."

"Not your fault," said the Colonel with emphasis. "Not your fault at all. Let's carry on."

The sporting batsman made one last despairing effort at self-destruction: "Your umpire hasn't actually given his decision yet, Colonel."

Robin Goodhey, thus addressed, could only shake his head. "I suppose it has to be 'not out,' in the circumstances," he said, miserably.

"It certainly has," answered Colonel Plounder with an Arctic quality in his voice, and turned to his field. "Get back to your places, you men. I'm going to bowl this fellow out, and then there can't be any doubt about it."

He took his run and delivered the ball. The batsman, not knowing quite what to do about it, shut both his eyes and smote blindly. He hit the best boundary of the afternoon.

"That settles it," said the Colonel, with all the heartiness he could muster, and they trooped back to the pavilion.

ROBIN, feeling more or less at one with a leper, a pariah dog, or any other variety of despised outcast, crawled over to the car where Daphne was waiting for him.

"I've made the most ghastly hash of things," he told her. "Don't talk about it. It's too tragic. Perhaps your father will unburden his soul at dinner. I shall give him every chance, because I sha'n't be there. I'm feeling very ill, and I shall retire to my room as soon as we get home, and probably I shall go back to London to-morrow."

She looked at him in alarm.

"Good gracious!" she cried. "Whatever's happened?"

"I can't tell you," he insisted, "because I haven't got the heart, and your father won't, because he's a gentleman. Try him after dinner, when I'm in bed and he's full of port. Here he comes now. For heaven's sake get the engine started, and drive like mad!"

Robin Goodhey sat on the edge of his bed and sipped a very large whisky that

"Here comes your father," he said. "For heaven's sake get the engine started and drive like mad!"

Daphne had smuggled up to him, wondering what he had better do. Possibly the old boy might cheer up after a night's rest, but, anyway, the situation was almost impossible. He certainly could not keep up the pretence of being "frightfully keen" any longer, after such an unfortunate lapse, but, equally certain, he could not now confess that both his prowess and his enthusiasm had been the children of Daphne's vivid imagination. Perhaps, on the whole, the best thing he could do would be to leave quietly at the dead of night.

A loud knock broke suddenly upon his unpleasant reveries.

"Come in," said Robin, automatically, and found himself all at once on his feet shaking hands with an apologetic and embarrassed Colonel Plounder.

"Not gone to bed yet," he managed to say at last. "Sickness of the spirit, rather than the body. What? Don't wonder, I'm sure."

Robin, in utter bewilderment, allowed

himself to be pump-handled and slapped on the back without knowing in the slightest what it was all about.

The Colonel plunged into another burst of conversation.

"I must apologize, Robin, my boy, for my rudeness this afternoon, but I was upset. Pardonably upset, I know you'll agree. But, needless to say, I had no idea at the time how it happened. I didn't hear a whistle, but then I'm getting a bit deaf, and I'm not in love. It was sporting of you to say nothing; damn' sporting, but she should have spoken up at once. However, better late than never, I suppose. She told me all about it at dinner, and, of course, I had to talk to her seriously."

Robin, still very much at sea, made a desperate effort to reach the solid ground of fact again.

"But I don't understand, sir," he said. "It was all my fault, and, of course, I'm very sorry, and——"

The Colonel effectually silenced him with another playful blow on the back.

"Nonsense!" he said. "It's no good talking like that now. Besides, I want to do the talking myself. I don't want you to feel too badly about this business. I'm quite sure that Daphne had no idea at all of the position, until I made it clear. But she has now. She's very distressed indeed. In fact—er—I'm afraid she thinks you may be seriously angry with her. I told her you had every excuse to be, but I said—well—that I'd have a word with you, and, dammit, you know, Robin, she is a very dear girl, even if she isn't as keen on cricket as you and I would like her to be."

One fact, and one fact only, shone through the haze of Robin's mental disturbances. This fine old boy seemed to think there was a row on between Daphne and himself. That, at least, he could put right.

"Of course I'm not angry, sir," he said. "I'll go down to her at once, if I may."

"Good boy!" boomed the Colonel. "Run along, and let her say she's sorry. I'll be in the library. You can pop in later and tell me you're friends again."

"I will, sir," said Robin, and fled downstairs like a rabbit.

He found Daphne in the drawing-room, waiting for him.

"My dear," he said, "I'm fuddled. About an hour ago your father looked at me as though I was a bit of mud on the carpet, and quite right too, and now he seems to think I'm a hero, suffering in silence for your crimes. What on earth have you been telling him?"

Daphne stood in front of him with her hands meekly folded behind her back.

"Well, you see, darling," she explained, "you have been suffering in silence for my crimes ever since you came here, so I thought I might as well make things square by suffering in silence for one of yours."

"That's very kind of you," he said, weakly. "But what have you been telling your father? That's what I want to know."

SHE permitted herself a very small smile at his bewilderment. "I told him I committed the unpardonable crime of whistling to and waving at an umpire. I said that when I drove into the field this afternoon I whistled like a train, to make you turn round, and then waved when you did; so it was all most terribly my fault that your mind wasn't on your job. I explained what an awful thing it was for a man who was so frightfully keen, to be placed in such a position, and I got quite eloquent about how you hadn't said a word in your own defence, because you'd rather die than have anyone think that I was to blame."

"But you can't let him think that," he interrupted her. "You mustn't."

"I can and I must, and I'm jolly well going to," she insisted. "It's only fair, and, anyway, you're not going to spoil everything by butting in now. Besides, I said a lot more than that. I told him that I was afraid you'd never want to speak to me again, and I asked him to put in a good word for me, and I wept pints and pints——"

"Just a minute," said Robin, and tilted up her chin with one finger. "Why, you really have been crying!"

"Of course I have," she said, indignantly, with the suspicion of a tremble in her voice. "You don't think I was pretending, do you? When everything had gone so hopelessly wrong? I only told Daddy you were keen on cricket, in the first place, because I knew it would buck him up so much. It was more than enough to make any girl cry. But, of course, Daddy was simply wonderfully comforting and 'Daddyish,' and told me he knew I'd still make you a good wife, even though I did whistle at umpires, which was awfully sweet of him, considering. So, my dear, if you think I've managed to pull you out of the hole I pushed you into, and if you agree with Daddy about the 'wife' part of the business—here I am."

Robin hugged her until she squealed for mercy.

"There," he said, when at last he let her go again, "that shows what I think, doesn't it?"

"Well," she gasped, laughing a little and sobbing a little, and trying to hug him back and tidy herself all at the same time, "for a man with a sprained wrist, I think it was a pretty convincing effort."

ENGLAND'S PREMIER SPORTSMAN

THE EARL OF LONSDALE

WITH the exception of the King himself, the Earl of Lonsdale is, without a doubt, the most popular sportsman in the land. At almost every kind of sporting function there the Yellow Earl—yellow has been the Lonsdale family colour for generations—is inevitably to be found. At race-meetings, at horse shows, at boxing contests, at circuses, and coster turn-outs, the most noticeable figure, and the one that an admiring public most loves to notice, is that of Colonel Hugh Cecil Lowther, K.G., fifth Earl of Lonsdale, Hereditary Admiral of the Coasts of Cumberland and Westmorland, and Lord Warden of the West Marches, Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, Colonel or honorary Colonel of several regiments, and prince of sportsmen.

At what period in Lord Lonsdale's life and career he achieved this title is of no consequence. It just grew round him slowly with the years, tribute to a unique combination of splendid and enduring physical and moral qualities which have made him the incarnate spirit of British sport and sportsmanship.

If one had to explain him in a sentence I should say that his secret is that in an age when standards are changing and in some instances slipping, he sets a great and inflexible standard of honour, duty, endeavour, and human fellowship.

His long face might stand as that of the archtype of the English sporting aristocrat. Every point is perfect—the long eye set under its tufted, tilted eyebrow at a slight angle, like a bull-terrier's, the mouth

By C. PATRICK THOMPSON

With the smile that is known to sportsmen throughout the land—Lord Lonsdale at a hunt Steeplechase.

broad and humorous, the nose and chin long and strong, the whole face compact, firmly modelled, patient, calm, smiling, "stained by the ruddy tan God's air doth give a man."

He gets his unfailing humour from the Irish strain on his mother's side, and his zest of life, passion for sport, and love of animals from a father who disdained perambulators and had his sons as babies carried about in panniers on a pony's back.

At the age of ten young Hugh Lowther was already a great reader. But he read only one book. His mother had told him the Bible was the best of all books, his father swore by Shakespeare, but, for himself, his only inclination was for Jorrocks. It was sixty years before he found another book at all comparable to the immortal hunting classic. This was Siegfried Sassoon's "Memoirs of a Fox-hunting Man." Lord Lonsdale presented the Hawthornden Prize to Sassoon for that book, confessing, with his broad smile, that this was the first time he had found himself closely associated with the literary world.

Born in different circumstances, he would certainly have achieved great fame as an athlete. As it is, many of his most memorable feats were the result of private wagers and whims, and were known at the time only to his own circle. He fought John L. Sullivan five rounds under an assumed name, and beat him. When Weston, the great American walker, came over here in 1878 and started all sporting England talking about walking feats, Sir John Astley wagered the Duke of Beaufort that the Duke could not find an Englishman to walk 100 miles in twenty-four hours. The Duke put up the Hon. Hugh Lowther, whose long legs covered the ground from London, *viâ* Barnet and Hatfield to a point north of Stamford, 100 miles in about twenty hours.

Mounted on The Quirk, he rode in the longest horse race ever run in England, a six-mile race over jumps modelled on those of the Grand National at Aintree, and won it. Once he had a dispute with another hunting man as to a horse's action in jumping a fence. He offered to put a couple of dinner plates on the ground before a fence and go to the other end of a field, ride at the jump where the plates were, and break them with the horse's hind hoofs. No one believed it could be done. But it was.

Wonderfully light hands, patience, kindness, and an extraordinary understanding, explain in the main Lord Lonsdale's celebrated mastery of the art of riding. But he also has one advantage that the ordinary gentleman rider lacks. He has worked with a circus and learnt how the circus men handle and train animals, and especially horses.

He was seventeen and staying with his parents in Switzerland, when he ran away and joined a circus. For eighteen months he travelled Switzerland with it and became quite an accomplished trick rider and acrobat. When he has the circus folk up now to his great castle in the north—as he does when Bertram Mills brings the big international circus to Olympia every Christmastide—he enjoys himself with them as with old friends. He talks their language, knows all about them and their life and ways, knew a good many of their fathers and grandfathers.

HE still amuses himself teaching his animals to perform and behave. He has trained his shooting pony, Merlin, to dance, bow, and pick up handkerchiefs. You may dine with him at Lowther Castle, or in Carlton-house Terrace, and never know there is a dog in the big room until you get up and the host calls them. Then they emerge from the shadowy corners where they have been lying, motionless but watchful.

All Lord Lonsdale's house dogs—and he has a pack which varies from nine to a dozen—follow him from room to room, and in each room each dog has his corner. Whenever their master adds a new dog to his pack he shows him his corner, and teaches him his place by taking him gently but firmly back whenever he leaves without permission, and shaking

a reproving finger at him. No animals of his are ever beaten. His taste in dogs, like his taste in horses, is catholic. When I last saw his pack it included a Labrador, a spaniel, a retriever, a collie, an Aberdeen terrier, and a lurcher.

His power over animals verges on the uncanny. There seems to be a mysterious communion between man and animal. He is, in fact, one of those rare men who are not only interested in animals, but really love them. To see him talking to his parrot, Polly, you would think he had a private understanding with that quaint bird. He is never casual with it, and when the Royal Family dined at Carlton-house Terrace on the occasion of his golden wedding he had Polly brought in in her giant cage and placed behind his chair, so that she also could enjoy the party—in which, indeed, she took an intense interest.

He has been married now for fifty-three years—his wife is a daughter of the tenth Marquess of Huntley—and he and Lady Lonsdale have seen a lot of the world and grown old gracefully together. Their golden wedding was attended by demonstrations of regard and affection for them such as few couples, however highly placed, however popular, have known. An enormous shower of gifts descended upon them. Even the after-dinner cabaret performers, a galaxy of stars got together by George Grossmith—Lord Lonsdale was showing the King and Queen their first cabaret—refused payment, and Lord Lonsdale did not urge money upon them. Instead, he sent each of the men a diamond scarf pin and each of the girls a diamond brooch, along with a personal letter.

The day previous, he was at the International Horse Show, and there was a break in the proceedings while the Prince of Wales presented him with a golden casket in recognition of all he had done for British sport. Subscriptions had been invited in sporting circles to cover the cost of this gift. No one thought there would be an embarrassingly large difference between the fund and the bill for the casket. When subscriptions came to be totted up, however, it was found that a huge sum remained after the great golden bowl had been paid for. He handed it over to trustees to found a convalescent home for sportsmen in need.

Lord Lonsdale has done a tremendous amount for charities, as much by personal effort as by private money gifts. When he was deriving an income of over £120,000 from one portion of his estates (large tracts of the 175,000 acres he owns are rich in minerals), he used to give £30,000 a year to the hospitals, and he only discontinued this contribution when revenue from the aforementioned source dwindled to comparatively nothing. However, he has made up for it in a variety of ways. Not long ago a Welsh hospital wanted £1,000. He had not £1,000 to give it, so instead he made a three-days' speaking tour and raised the money.

He talks well, with an old-fashioned way

Before the War. Lord Lonsdale in conversation with the ex-Kaiser at German imperial manœuvres.

In Court dress for a levée at St. James's Palace.

of dropping some h's and clipping his final g's, and in an anecdotal way—his life has been so full that he has an endless fund of stories and experiences to draw upon. And whatever the stress of the day he never sounds tired, or looks fatigued.

He has always kept himself in such fine fettle that, at seventy-three, he retains his lean figure and agile step. When he presents the bouquets to the girls at the Olympia Circus he does not hand them over the barrier but springs lightly to the top and down on to the tan. I remember at the last Horse Show he spotted something wrong at the far end of the arena, and, without taking his cigar out of his mouth, ran easily the length of that considerable space with the gait of a practised runner, and arrived, cool, unperturbed, and not breathing any quicker.

His cigar is as inevitable as Mr. Baldwin's pipe. He smokes leisurely, not keeping the cigar constantly between his lips, but raising it, taking a leisurely puff or two, and then not drawing again for a minute. Often the cigar goes out. Then he flicks off the ash after a while and lights up again. He will re-light a cigar half-a-dozen times or more in the course of an evening, carefully blowing through the cigar each time before drawing—that is the way to get a clean sweet smoke from a re-lighted cigar.

He used to have 150 horses in his stables at Barley Thorpe Hall, the Elizabethan mansion at Oakham he kept as a hunting-box, and it was quite a ceremony, going round with him to look at the horses. A groom would hand him a pair of yellow gloves as he entered the stable yard, and as he went from stable to stable he would take a handful of fresh-sliced carrots from a basket which a groom brought up. That ceremony still goes on at Lowther Castle, but the Lonsdale stables have been cut down considerably since their owner retired from the hunting field.

As an M.F.H.—he has hunted half-a-dozen famous packs—he spared neither time nor money in the hunt interests; hounds, horses, and hunt servants were of the best, kept right up to the mark, and he always showed wonderful sport. He dragooned the field, but from such a man the field could stand it. Hunting to him is an exact craft—like all sport. It must be run to rule, to custom, and on top of its form. No slackness. No slovenliness. No transgressions. No regarding the hunt as an exercise for a show jumper, or an opportunity to ride how you like, where you like, and when you like.

Lord Lonsdale kept a big kennel at the Hall, too, but the dogs that most intrigued his guests were a pack of miniature bloodhounds used for hunting deer and hares. Prince Albert brought the breed over from

Germany, but they were scattered far and wide after his death, and Lord Lonsdale, coming across some in Devonshire, took a fancy to them, and restored the breed.

Guests going up to stay with him at Lowther or The Stud House (his place at Oakham) may find a car waiting for them, but more probably they will make the journey up in an eighteenth-century coach on high "C" springs, drawn by a pair of chestnuts, and driven by postilions in yellow-faced liveries and yellow beaver hats, with a small tiger on the box.

The owner has had a lot of bath-rooms put in fairly recently at Lowther, and is rather proud of this modernizing touch; but at Barley Thorpe Hall he retained the ancient furniture, the walls were covered with old sporting prints and caricatures, and there was no electric light. (The *chef*, however, was completely up-to-date.)

Lord Lonsdale does not, in fact, consider electric light or a number of other inventions absolutely essential to human happiness.

He succumbed to the motor-car, but individualized those he acquired by having them coloured his own traditional yellow. But some modern appliances he considers derogatory to the dignity and comfort of life, and will not have; and the telephone is one of these. He will not speak on the telephone or have it in any of the rooms that he uses. In his immense town house in Carlton-house Terrace there is only one instrument and no extension from that. He writes, when he has to, in his own hand, and won't dictate to a stenographer. Enamoured of a more leisurely day, he refuses to be hustled into the hurly-burly, or to lose the savour of life by speeding it up beyond the tempo which suits him.

One of these days horses will finally go, conquered by the machine. He will be sorry to see that. In the War he raised a cavalry regiment, King Edward's Horse, worked tremendously for the Blue Cross, started breeding with the object of producing a better heavy artillery horse. In his own stables now he has everything from cart-horses and Arab thoroughbreds to shooting ponies and donkeys.

It was he who put coster night on the map of the Horse Show. He wanted the costers to treat their mokes better, and his method of achieving this object, to take a personal interest in both and give a cup for the best turn-out, has been wonderfully successful.

A useful man with his fists, the Earl. In his youth he "put up his dooks" more often than he perhaps cares to remember, but he was in his middle fifties when a West-Country drayman refused to pull his heavy vehicle out of the way of a woman's pony-trap, and

Cartoon supplied by Gooch

"Spy's" cartoon of Lord Lonsdale at the age of twenty-nine.

Lord Lonsdale, who chanced to be passing, invited an argument on the subject. The drayman fancied himself with his fists and was very ready. Inside a minute, however, he had ceased temporarily to take any interest whatsoever in proceedings, so Lord Lonsdale, with a bow to the lady, drove the dray aside and made way for her.

Boxing owes more to him than to any other man living. When the National Sporting Club had its home in Covent Garden he was seldom missing from his ring-side seat on Monday nights.

He would usually come in—as he comes now to a Lonsdale Belt contest or a fight at Olympia or the Albert Hall—alone, and in tails and white tie always. He doesn't take parties to fights.

When the men interest him you will see him get up and go to each of their corners in turn and eye them with that shrewd measuring eye trained to spot the good and bad points of every animal, including *homo sapiens*. Back in his seat, out comes a pencil and a bit of paper. Round by round he makes his own notes of the fight. He did this on that memorable night at the Liverpool Stadium when the crowd disagreed with the referee's decision of a draw in the Cuthbert-Tarleton fight. Lord Lonsdale's notes made him agree with the crowd, but to restore order he climbed into the ring. In the midst of the hullabaloo he could not make himself heard. It was the first time he had ever been refused a hearing. He remained, however, genial and self-possessed, and when someone near the ring yelled "Shut up!" he quickly retorted with a slight broadening of his indestructible smile, "Same to you."

His authority in sporting matters derives from something more then integrity and an unswerving code. Here is a little story which illustrates the trouble to which he will go to get practical experience of any sport in which he is interested.

He takes a keen interest in coursing, and had a greyhound breeder up to Lowther for trials. "What about a slipper?" asked the man, who had brought a dozen dogs. "I'll act as slipper," said Lord Lonsdale. The breeder was somewhat dubious, for slipping is an expert job, but Lord Lonsdale handled it as if he had been at the game all his life. "One might almost think your lordship had been at this business before,"

Ever since he ran away to join one at the age of seventeen, Lord Lonsdale has retained his love for circuses. He is seen above with some of the performers at the Christmas circus at Olympia.

observed the breeder. "I have,' replied Lord Lonsdale. "Have you ever heard of Mr. Shepherd, the slipper?" "Why, yes." "Well, I'm Mr. Shepherd."

In fact, Lord Lonsdale had gone to coursing meetings in the South, and under the incognito of "Mr. Shepherd" had mastered the job of slipper. This genius for the practical is half the secret of the sporting Earl's appeal not only to the hearts but to the heads of a sporting nation.

In the last five or six years he has got rid not only of his hunting-box, but also of his big castle on the Cumberland coast, an enormous place with eighty beds. He used to yacht off that coast. But he is not often in blue serge now. He got his sea legs with his father in the *Hornet*, sailed with the Earl of Dunraven in the famous *Valkyrie*, and bought from him Watson's *Deirdre*, and with her won twenty-one flags in thirty-five starts in a year. Then he had the big schooner *Verona*, subsequently the *Shamrock*, and entertained the Kaiser aboard her at Cowes in 1894.

He used to travel a good deal and shoot big-game in India and Africa. He and Lady Lonsdale, indeed, have seen together a large part of the world. But he is seldom abroad now. He divides his time between town and his great place in the North, shoots, rides, goes racing, occasionally sits on his red bench in the House of Lords, attends to a hundred-and-one duties. On the whole he takes life more easily, but gets about as much as ever. Ascot would be unthinkable without his canary coach and the band playing on the lawn outside his temporary lodging—he usually takes The Grange in the High Street—at dinner-time. Newmarket would not be Newmarket without the tall figure riding round the paddocks and enclosures on a pony. Goodwood would lose its picturesqueness without Lord Lonsdale in informal attire. And what informal attire! Last time I saw him he wore an old soft grey hat, a checked cream waistcoat under a long old-fashioned frock coat, striped trousers, brown socks, and old comfortable ghillie shoes; and he looked absolutely "right," while a millionaire owner alongside him in the paddock, and clad in correct morning clothes with a glossy topper, high white collar, and gloves, looked all wrong.

A fine character-study of Lord Lonsdale in his box at Covent Garden.

But whatever he is wearing, and wherever he is, you can see that he belongs to more spacious and leisured days. With his picturesque look and setting, his habit of manner and mind, his preoccupation with sport and animals, and remoteness from intellectualism, his physical presence and prowess, he reminds England of the romantic side of feudalism. He is like a brave banner from the past planted in the centre of the pattern of England's sporting life. Long may he be spared to enjoy the esteem, admiration, and affection of sportsmen the whole world over.

A GAMBLING GAME

By

GEORGE WESTON

Illustrated by EDWARD OSMOND

I

THE *Southern Queen* was about to leave her New York dock "for an extensive cruise to Central and South America—a cruise for cultured people—easily one of the most outstanding travel events of the year . . ."

With these cultured people, however, our story has little to do, except for one who fell overboard with a frantic splash. So, instead of starting with a description of the distinguished person who was having his picture taken on the hurricane deck by a squad of press photographers, we will begin with Bunny, a thick-set and wily white-coated steward who, underneath a cherubic expression, probably concealed as many tricks of the Great Deep as any two men that ever laid table in a ship's dining-room or closed a port-hole against a freshening sea.

For the last half-hour, instead of wrestling with baggage, Bunny had haunted C deck near the top of the gang-plank; and whenever a visitor stepped on board—easily spotted by his air of general uncertainty—it didn't take Bunny many seconds to establish contact with him.

"Begging your pardon sir," he said to the last one, speaking in a whisper of confidence. "Are you looking for someone?"

"Yes; I've a friend on board."

"The name, sir?"

"Kenneally."

"There's a passenger list inside . . . Here we are: Miss Kenneally. Room E 311. She may be in there now looking after her baggage; shall we try it, sir?"

Downstairs past the Little Shop—and downstairs past the Purser's Office—and to the right—and to the left—and along a quiet corridor.

"Of course, I'm not supposed to be doing this," said Bunny, deprecatingly, "and if the Chief Steward saw me I'd get into trouble for leaving my post upstairs. But in these hard times a man has to take a chance now and then—— Oh, thank you, sir; I'm sure I wasn't expecting anything! And now you've done me a good turn like this, perhaps you'll pardon the liberty if I try to do one for you——"

At this his voice became so confidential that it can only be described as a wheezy whisper.

"Down at Havana last trip I bought a few bottles of Golden Ducatoon—and if you'd like a bottle, sir—and wouldn't think two dollars too much——"

Others of the crew, catching half-guessed glimpses of these exchanges of bottles for dollars, winked as they spread the news.

"Bunny's aboard." "Have you seen Bunny?" "Bunny's aboard."

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"Bunny's aboard—and up to his tricks again," said Sam the barber, busy trimming the hair of Fritz Krauss, who played the 'cello and sang tenor in the ship's orchestra.

"So somebody told me—said he came aboard broke——"

"He may have been broke when he came aboard," said Sam, significantly, "but not now!"

"He will be, though, when he meets Tex Taylor to-night."

"Did Tex get his promotion to Chief Baggage Master?"

"Yes; and believe me, that's a fat job on a cruise like this—with half the passengers going down to the baggage room every day to get to their trunks."

Meanwhile, Bunny had returned to B deck and was making his way toward the top of the gang-plank when he caught sight of a tall young man in white sweater, blue serge trousers, and white shoes, who was puffing out a professional chest in the open doorway of the ship's gymnasium—a tall young man who had possibly saved Bunny's life the year before when the latter, returning to duty in a state of considerable exaltation, had stepped over the wrong side of the tender and had found himself in the water

All at once Vic Simmons appeared from the welter of troubled ripples—and Mrs. Vandyke was with him.

of Havana harbour instead of on the platform at the bottom of the stairs which led up to his ship.

"Why, it's Vic Simmons!" exclaimed Bunny. "I thought you had left the sea, and was a swimming instructor now."

"Sure I did—and was," said Vic, beaming. "But you remember Mary Fitzgerald, the trained nurse on the *Caribbean Queen*?"

"Remember her?" said Bunny. "Who wouldn't?"

"Well," continued Vic, colouring a little, "she signed on as nurse for this cruise—and things being pretty dull in the winter—well—I signed on, too—as physical instructor, as you see from my rig."

"We've got a good crowd on board," said Bunny, referring not at all to the cultured people who were clustered at the rail, throwing streamers of coloured paper down on the dock as the last gang-plank was rolled away from the ship. "Bob Bennett's here—and Cockeye Coleman is on as assistant chef—and I never spotted a likelier-looking lot of stewardesses. There's one down on E deck—a little one with red——"

The *Southern Queen's* mighty siren suddenly silenced all lesser sounds; and a few moments later a barely perceptible tremor ran through the ship.

"We're off," said Bunny, carelessly; and casting an indulgent glance at the shouting, waving mob at the rail, he added, "Bless their little hearts, you'd think they'd never put out to sea before—and perhaps some of them haven't. Look at that fat old girl with the armful of roses. She not only wants everybody to see her: they must hear her, too."

"I'll buy your chance of the subscription and give you fifty dollars for it," said Tex, as Vic rose to go.

As a matter of fact, the portly passenger with the roses was a very important person —being no one less than the famous Mrs. Vandyke. And next to having her picture in the paper, Mrs. Vandyke liked nothing better than, first, to attract attention ; and, second, to appear supremely bored with the attention thus attracted.

At the moment when Bunny first noticed her, she was engaged upon the first of these operations, leaning over the rail as far as the roses would let her, and shouting a final message to a delegation from one of her

Young Girl Movements which had been assembled on the dock below with their own Fife and Drum Corps, so that Mrs. Vandyke might have a proper farewell before she sailed away on that extensive cruise which has already been briefly indicated to you.

"That old girl had better mind her eye," said Bunny, "or the first thing *she'll* know——"

He never finished the line, for, just at that second, trying to cup both hands to her mouth while she leaned over and held on to her roses at the same time, Mrs. Vandyke suddenly lost her balance, and a few moments later there was a frantic splash below. The young physical instructor had already made his way across the deck and, eagerly vaulting the rail, he, too, disappeared beneath the surface of the dark and narrow strip of water which lay between the dock and the moving ship.

For as long as it might take you to count ten, nothing could be seen below but a welter of troubled ripples; and then all at once Vic Simmons appeared—and Mrs. Vandyke was with him.

II.

UPSTAIRS, in the first-class dining-room, everything possible had been done that might disguise from the passengers the fact that, after all, they were eating in a ship. There were casement windows, for instance, a fireplace, paintings, a musicians' gallery. But down where the crew gathered for refreshment and relaxation, a stranger would never have to guess twice whether he was on the sea or on the land.

The ribs and plates of the vessel's sides were obvious to the most casual glance, and so were the port-holes—closed now and slightly weeping as the black seas streamed over them with a swishing promise that, sooner or later, they would gain admission. With the magic of his crayon, a great artist would probably have found a way to indicate the smell of hot oil and bilge water, the creaking of channel irons and steel sheets as the *Southern Queen* ploughed her gargantuan furrow through the waves. But dearer to him than all of these, he would have found delight in the human group that was gathered around one of the mess-tables.

They were playing poker—not casually and conversationally as it was being played in the passengers' smoke-rooms above, but intensely, vividly, as though their whole hearts and souls were in the game. Dining-room and bedroom stewards, who had gathered a small harvest of preliminary tips, able-bodied seamen who had been rewarded for trundling baggage all afternoon, dark-handed sons of the engine-room: they were all intent upon the game. Indeed, the only one who seemed to be indifferent was Tex Taylor, who sat at the head of the table—his blue jowls freshly shaved, his black hair rich with the tropical aroma of bay-rum.

At the moment he was dealing—holding the pack well forward, knowing that his hands were being watched by every pair of eyes round the table.

"Cards?" he crisply demanded.

"I don't want you to work too hard," said Bunny. "I'll take two."

"One," said Vic Simmons, he (you may remember) whom you last saw in the water with Mrs. Vandyke.

"Three to the dealer," said Tex, ostentatiously snapping them on the table. "Your bet, Bunny."

"A dollar—from a scholar," said Bunny, pushing it into the pot.

"*And* a dollar," said Vic.

"I think you're both bluffing," said Tex. "I'll raise you five."

"This way out," said Bunny, dropping his cards face down on the table.

"Five more," said Vic.

"Five more," said Tex.

"*And* five."

"*And* five."

"That's all I've got," said Vic, regretfully, "or I'd come again. I filled my flush—ace-king high."

"Me," said Tex, "I filled my full house—three fours and a pair of sevens."

"On a three-card draw," muttered one of the dark-handed sons of the engine-room. "What did you draw to, Tex?"

"Lucky sevens. What's the matter, Vic?" he continued, as the young man arose. "Not going to leave us already?"

"Broke," said Vic.

"No you're not!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean there's just a chance that they'll be getting a subscription up for you for fishing the old lady out of the water this afternoon. Tell you what I'll do. I'll buy your chance of the subscription and give you fifty dollars for it, right here and now."

"Fifty's not enough," protested Bunny, quickly. "I'll give him seventy-five."

"That's a good idea," said Tex. "We'll auction it off. I'll give a hundred. Any other bids?"

"Not from me," said Bunny, sadly, shaking his head. "But if I was Vic, I wouldn't sell for any hundred dollars."

"Why not?" demanded Tex. "You bid seventy-five a minute ago; you were willing enough then that he should sell for that—as long as he sold to you. But

Vic's of age. What do you say, Vic. Want to sell ? "

" The luck was just turning," frowned the young man, thoughtfully. " Guess I might as well."

" Atta-boy, Vic ! " " Take it while the taking's good ! " " You may fall overboard yourself to-morrow." " And when you've said and done, it's just like *finding* a hundred dollars," said Arthur Simms, one of the dining-room stewards.

But after finding it, it wasn't long before Vic was also losing it. His final misfortune arose from backing another flush against Bunny's four-card draw. Upon the showdown it appeared that Bunny, holding an ace, had drawn two more and a pair of kings.

" To think that it happened twice," groaned Vic, after the game had broken up for the night. " That's what I can't get over ! "

" To think of Tex Taylor buying that subscription of yours for a hundred dollars," frowned Bunny, thoughtfuly. " That's what *I* can't get over . . . ! "

III.

NEXT morning the weather was rough, with a stiff east wind and a blinding rain. At home, the cultured people would hardly have noticed it. Half-a-dozen running steps to the car, and *that* for the wind and rain.

But here on the frowning face of the North Atlantic, it didn't seem wise to snap the tips of one's fingers and thumbs at the elements. It were better, perhaps, to place them reverently together and breathe a short prayer for those in peril on the sea.

Bunny beamed as he dressed himself by the simple expedient of putting on his shoes and a short white coat.

" Thank God I'm a bedroom steward this trip," he thought, as he made his lurching way upstairs. " If the weather holds out, this ought to be a good day for me."

First he had his work to do ; his length of rubber-tiled corridor to wash, his brass-work to polish until it shone again. Dropping down to the galley once, he found time for a cup of coffee and a short chat with Cockeye Coleman, the assistant chef, who was an old crony of his.

" Too bad about Vic Simmons, selling his chance of the purse to Tex Taylor," said Cockeye.

" Aye," said Bunny, as they both braced themselves against the counter while the *Southern Queen* seemed to be trying to roll over on her back. " Too bad, as well, that you haven't a drop of cooking brandy to settle this coffee. . . . Ah, that's better. . . . You'll have it pretty easy this morning, my lad, I'm thinking. There won't be many passengers down to breakfast."

" And for a measly hundred dollars—that's the worst of it. Why, I remember on the old *St. Paul*——"

" Aye," said Bunny. " But remember this, too : Tex hasn't got that money yet."

" He'll get it, though," said Cockeye, dispiritedly. " Remember how well he wiped your eye the last voyage we were on together, and how he won the pool by standing in with the engineers ? "

Whether or not it was the one which had been wiped so well, one of Bunny's eyes became involved in a slow but significant wink. " Listen, my lad," he whispered, nearly knocking his teeth out against the side of Coleman's head, as an unexpected lurch of the *Queen* threw them both off balance. " Lithen, my lad," he whispered. " Where do you keep your freshest eggs ? And I don't mean the ones for omelettes, either. I mean the eggs you use for soft boiling."

" They're in the ice-box," said the wondering Cockeye. " Why ? "

" Never you mind why. You bring me out a dozen and put 'em in this bowl where they can't roll away. And if you see me coming with a pail, you just turn your head away, and ask no questions."

AT seven o'clock, donning a clean coat and apron, Bunny started out to make the rounds of his passengers, knocking first on the door of E 218, which bore the name of the distinguished person who was having such an impressive picture taken a few short hours before.

" Come——" said a feeble voice inside.

" Just dropped in to see what you'd like for breakfast, sir," said Bunny, entering and offering a bill-of-fare which was still damp from the press of the ship's printer.

" Nothing — nothing —— " groaned the man of knowledge. And being a firm believer in having his young gentlemen educated in the twin principles of observation and deduction, he weakly continued : " Do I look as if I want anything to eat ? "

" Well, you do look a little bit under the weather, sir, and that's a fact," said Bunny, soothingly, " but I can get you something that will soon make you feel better. It's a simple, pleasant remedy that a friend of mine worked out, and though he charges a couple of dollars for it, just to defray the expense of manufacture, you needn't pay a penny if you don't feel better by nine o'clock."

" Two dollars ? Why, I'd give ten ——"

" Two dollars is all he charges, sir. I'll be right back."

Bunny returned to his pantry, and breaking the yolks of two eggs into a bowl, he warmed them by placing the bowl in a pan of hot water. Then, adding two tablespoonsful from one of his unsold bottles of Golden Ducatoon, he beat the yolks and the liquid together until there was enough to fill a tall glass.

"Here you are, sir," he said, after he had hurried back to his passenger. "If you'll just take this. No, sir; you can't drink it; you eat it with the spoon."

"Smells good," said the man of learning, weakly. "Mmm—tastes good, too. What is it?"

"Known as Bunny's Beneficent Balm, sir... There. . . . Now we'll see if you don't feel better by nine o'clock; and then you can decide whether or not it's worth the two dollars it cost, sir."

THE dozen eggs proved to be an able estimate. By eight o'clock, Bunny had mixed his sixth glass of Balm, and all his passengers were on their way to being cured.

"Twelve dollars," thought Bunny. "Not so bad for a morning's work. But now let's get to business."

A passenger list hung in his pantry, and he had already learned that Mrs. Van Dyk was in A 10, an expensive suite of bedroom, sitting-room, and bath on the promenade deck. So first making sure that the assistant chief steward was starting breakfast and therefore wouldn't be making his morning tour of inspection for at least a quarter of an hour, Bunny hurried up to the promenade deck and was just in time to see a trained nurse come out of A 10—one of those blessed nurses who combine the gift of beauty with the art of healing, a combination which never lasts long because the pill in the hand finds it increasingly hard to compete with the ring upon the finger.

"Well, bless my soul, if it isn't Mary Fitzgerald!" exclaimed the wily steward, and in the subdued light of the corridor, his features might have reminded you of one of those cherubs with which Michelangelo liked to decorate the corners of his ceilings. "How's your patient?"

"Hello, Bunny," smiled Mary. "Why, I think she might have been up and out this morning, if the weather hadn't turned so rough."

"You mean she's sea-sick?"

"Pretty close to it. The doctor's in with her now."

The door of A 10 opened, and Dr. Morin appeared—a tall, good-looking young physician who was equally popular with the matrons and the mademoiselles, partly perhaps because to a distinguished appearance, either Art or Nature had added a dreamy eye and a quizzical smile. But when he saw Nurse Fitzgerald his dreamy eye immediately became focused into something more like admiration; and although of course he might have been merely desirous of assuring himself that she wasn't running a temperature, his hand lightly passed round her waist and rested for a moment on her wrist.

"Mm—mm——" said Bunny, as the doctor passed on. Now, another man might have made the same remark and it wouldn't have called for response. But Bunny put such a wealth of human inference, such a richness of philosophy, into his cryptic comment that Nurse Fitzgerald simply couldn't ignore it.

"Oh, he doesn't mean anything by it," she hastily responded. And, as though to change the subject, "Have you seen Vic this morning?"

"No," said Bunny, dryly. "But I saw him last night."

"I hope he hasn't been gambling," she sighed. "You know I nearly married him this winter——"

"I know you did. In fact, I thought you had."

"But I was afraid of his gambling. And besides, he really couldn't afford to get married. My dad's been a poker-player all his life—and I know what it did to him—so I finally told Vic that if he'd give up playing cards—and save a thousand dollars ——"

"Mm—mm," said Bunny again, but with a different inflection this time. "A thousand dollars, you said?"

"Yes."

"And a promise to leave the cards alone?"

"To stop playing poker, yes——"

They were interrupted by a deep-toned groan from inside A 10—one of those maritime sounds of human suffering which in stormy weather are offered so freely at Neptune's shrine.

"Mm—mm," said Bunny for the third time. "That reminds me that I really came up to see the old girl in there. Do you mind telling her that one of the stewards would like to see her for a moment—an old steward with a message of sympathy from the crew?"

"That sounds funny to me," said Mary, uncertainly. "You're sure it's all right?"

"Of course it's all right," said Bunny, more in righteousness than anger. "Did you ever know me to do anything that wasn't all right?"

"Yes," she promptly answered. They looked at each other—the young nurse and the wily steward who was no longer

"Let me talk to her alone," whispered Bunny.

young—and whatever she saw in his glance, Mary disappeared inside A 10 and presently stood in the doorway with a beckoning finger.

"Let me talk to her alone," he whispered.

Two minutes later he re-appeared and hurried down to his pantry, returning soon with a tray on which, beneath a napkin, he was precariously balancing an extra large glass of Bunny's Beneficent Balm.

IV.

JUST before noon the storm abated and snatches of blue sky began to appear. Down in the baggage-room Tex Taylor picked up a page of manuscript in the composition of which he had spent most of the morning.

"We'll be busy this afternoon, now that it's calm again," he said to Angus McDermott, his assistant. "I'm going upstairs for a minute to see the Chief Steward. Remember now, all the tips that you get are to go in that box in my desk."

"'Remember'?" said Angus, dryly. "Ye gi'e me no chance to forget."

Tex hastened up the stairs and a minute later was admitted into the presence of his chief.

"Begging your pardon, sir," he began, in the immemorial formula of the sea. "But would you mind if I had some cards printed by the ship's printer—to get up a subscription for Simmons——"

"Too late," said the chief steward. "The subscription has already been started."

"Quick work, that, sir," said Tex, trying to hide a smile of satisfaction. "Do you remember the passenger's name who started it?"

"It wasn't a passenger: it was one of the stewards—Bunny Ayres. He had a resolution—signed by a committee of three passengers. The printer's probably working on it now."

Instead of trying to hide a smile, Tex now found himself concerned in concealing a frown of suspicion. He hastened down to the printer's office and a minute later was reading one of the first copies of a card which was to be placed by the side of each passenger's plate in the dining-room that night.

"Since the dawn of history, Mankind has rewarded its Heroes.

"Yesterday, Vic Simmons saved one of our passengers from being crushed and drowned between the ship and the dock.

"You may be the next who will need rescuing!

"To-morrow, in the dining-room entrance you will find a box with a sign above it: 'Subscription for Vic Simmons.'

"If you believe that heroism should be rewarded, place your contribution in an envelope—with your name and state-room number upon it—and drop it in the box.

"All contributions will be publicly acknowledged. The three largest contributors will serve as a Committee of Presentation and a photograph of the occasion will be sent to the New York newspapers.

Mrs. Vandyke.
"Cornelius S. Pettigrew, M.A."
"Abner J. Walls."

"Did Bunny bring this in?" demanded Tex, no longer trying to hide his frown of suspicion.

"Aye," said Homer Bliss, the printer, methodically feeding the press.

"He didn't write it, though," said Tex. "Somebody with brains wrote this."

"Aye," said Homer, imperturbably kicking away. "And Bunny's no fool, either."

"That's all right," said Tex. "I'll straighten this out before morning."

He straightened it out in the mess-room shortly before midnight. The evening poker game was drawing to a close when Vic Simmons appeared, his hands in his pockets for the same reason that teetotallers used to turn their glasses upside down.

"Hello, Vic," said Tex after a few moments' frowning thought.

"Hello, Tex."

"Now, listen, Vic. I don't want any mistake about this. I see a subscription is being started. Whatever you get from that—no matter how little or how much—you're to pay it right over to me. Is that right?"

"Sure is," said Vic, beginning to stare. "Why?"

"In other words, I *bought* the subscription from you. Is that straight?"

"Of course. Who's squealing?"

"Nobody yet. I want a clear understanding—that's all—in the presence of these witnesses, so nobody need think that he can gum up a perfectly simple agreement between two gentlemen."

"Between two what-did-he-say?" Bunny asked his neighbour in a loud whisper.

"I said, 'Between two gentlemen'!" repeated Tex in a loud voice. "Now what do *you* say?"

"I say, 'Play cards,'" said Bunny. "I've got a dollar in this pot—and I'd like a run for my money."

"'A dollar'!" scoffed Tex. "Do you call that money?"

And indeed the sum was small compared with the amount which was chalked on the blackboard in front of the purser's office before noon the next morning.

"Bulletin Number One," read the announcement. "Amount of Vic Simmons Life Saving Fund to 10 a.m.: $723.50. Have *you* made your contribution yet?"

It didn't take long for Bunny to slip up to the gymnasium and whisper the amount into Vic Simmons's reddening ear.

"Oh, I know I'm a natural-born fool," Vic nearly groaned in a low voice—low because two of the passengers were riding the bicycles and a stout elderly matron was trying to reduce her poundage on the mechanical camel. "And I guess Mary does, too. I suppose—I suppose somebody's told her by this time that Tex Taylor's going to get the money instead of me."

"I don't know," said Bunny. "She's been pretty busy with Doctor Morin lately."

"Don't I know it?" sighed Vic.

At three o'clock another announcement was chalked on the purser's blackboard.

"Bulletin Number Two. Life Saving Fund to 2.30 p.m.: $1,246. All contributions must be placed in box before 7 p.m. *to-night*."

Again Bunny carried the news to the gymnasium. Vic didn't nearly groan this time. He did it quite.

"You know, Bunny," he said in a broken voice, "I could have got married on that money. Mary told me last year that if I could save a thousand dollars—and stop playing poker. And the worst of it is, she hasn't heard yet. She went past the window just before you came in; and do you know what she did? She waved her hand to me."

"Wait till she hears about Tex Taylor," said Bunny in a falsely sympathetic wheeze. "It's her foot that she'll be waving then, I'm thinking."

"You needn't rub it in," groaned Vic again.

But Bunny, following his own fell purpose, went looking for Vic again just before the passengers came streaming out of the dining-room that evening. The gymnasium was locked up for the day, but Bunny finally found his quarry on the front of B deck, leaning against the anchor winch, his pale face turned to a paler moon, cheerlessly chewing the end of vain regrets.

"Heard the news yet?" whispered Bunny

"No."

'Dinner was about half over when the purser stood up by the side of his table and rapped a spoon against his plate for attention. 'Total of Life Saving Fund,' he said, 'is $1,870.' Up gets Mrs. Vandyke. 'If somebody will raise it to $1,900,' she says, 'I'll make it an even two thousand.' No sooner said than done. They're going to engross a resolution and make the presentation the night after we leave Havana. So you'd better begin getting your little speech ready. You're the hero of the hour, my lad."

"The fool of the hour, you mean," said Vic, bitterly.

Bunny first looked over his shoulders to make sure that no one was within listening distance.

"Listen to me now," he whispered. "If I can wangle that money out of Tex Taylor for you, will you swear on paper to Mary that you won't play poker again till death do you part?"

"But you can't wangle it out of him," said Vic, with just the least touch of hope in his voice. "I promised, and I can't go back on my promise."

"That's all right," said Bunny, grimly. "I didn't promise him anything—except to get even for the way he trimmed me last voyage. So now if I can coax him out of this two thousand dollars—and make everything all right between you and Mary—will you promise——?"

"Sure will!" exclaimed Vic, eagerly. "Gosh, Bunny; if you can do that. . . . Where are you going?"

"That's all right," said Bunny, already stepping over the anchor chain. "You stay here and sun yourself in the moonlight; but me: I've got some work to do and there isn't any time to waste."

V.

THE *Southern Queen*, like a once-exiled monarch returned to her rightful domain, was gliding imperiously through a balmy sea under a sky of dark blue velvet sprinkled with glittering gems. The cultured people who made up her passenger list were assembled in the lounge to hear a lecture and hold a discussion on "What I Saw in Havana."

"But before the lecture starts," said Professor Pettigrew, speaking from the stage as though he, too, had returned to his own rightful domain, "we have a pleasant duty to perform. We have a hero to praise. We have an act of heroism to reward. Mr. Vic Simmons, will you please ascend the rostrum?"

Vic made his way to the platform, and while the audience applauded he bowed, and shook hands with the Committee of Presentation: Professor Pettigrew, Mrs. Vandyke, and a large stately widow with an ostrich feather fan, which she always kept slowly waving.

"Vic Simmons," began the Professor. "From the earliest pages of human history we learn that mankind has ever delighted to honour its heroes——"

A Gambling Game

Bunny was standing near the doorway with an attentive delegation from the crew—some of whom you have met before. Sam the barber was there, for instance, and Angus MacDermott from the baggage room, and Cockeye Coleman from the galley, and the little red-headed stewardess from E deck. And Tex Taylor, too, was there, his blue jowls freshly shaved, his black hair rich with the tropical aroma of bay-rum.

"From the pages of history we have also learned this," Professor Pettigrew was presently continuing, "that the lives of our heroes are uncertain. To-morrow, sir, you may risk your life again; and to-morrow, your heroism may be crowned with the supreme sacrifice. The tumult and shouting of praise will soon be stilled; but what of those who have loved you, and those who have depended upon you for the necessities and comforts of life? After earnest reflection, therefore, and following a suggestion of Mrs. Vandyke herself, your committee presents you with this watch, suitably engraved, as a constant token of our admiration for you."

"You wouldn't take a watch away from the boy; would you, Tex?" whispered Bunny near the door.

"The balance of the fund of $2,000," continued the Professor in a breathless silence, "we have forwarded to the great National Trust Company of America, with instructions that it be placed in trust and invested—the income to be paid to your wife as long as she lives, the payments to start as soon as you return to New York. This, sir, is the receipt for the funds, embodying the provisions which I have thus briefly set forth——"

It was nearly an hour later before Tex found Bunny enjoying the balmy air of the southern seas on the front of B deck.

"Cooking up some more dirty work?" growled Tex.

"Now, Tex," beamed Bunny, "you didn't hear me squealing when you trimmed me at poker last voyage—that game which you had started before I came in—remember?—when I didn't know that you were playing deuces wild?"

"That was your funeral."

"And this is yours," chuckled Bunny.

"Yes; but you can't get away with this! I just found out that Vic Simmons isn't married. How can the income of that money be paid to his wife, if he hasn't got one?"

Bunny held up a warning hand and pointed to the dimly seen figures of Vic Simmons and Mary Fitzgerald—standing very close together as far up in the bows as they could get.

"Don't you worry, Tex," whispered Bunny. "That boy isn't scared of nothing when he once gets started—and something tells me that he's going to have a wife all right by the time he gets back to New York!"

ACROSTICS

Our forty-eighth series of acrostics begins with No. 217, printed below, and will run for four months. Prizes to the value of twelve guineas will, at the conclusion of the series, be awarded to the most successful solvers.

DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 217.

(The First of the Series.)

Who rules the waves, though not the land?
What is he holding in his hand?

1. What is it falls at set of sun,
   And sounds the same as an errant one?
2. Which is the Oxford college, named
   The same as a Devonshire city famed?
3. Which is the ocean that will fit
   If the final letter we omit?
4. Which is the ugly creature, said
   To carry a jewel in its head?
5. When you hear a click, and the fieldsmen shout,
   Who is the man that gives you out?
6. Who pondered the apple's fall, till he
   Arrived at the Law of Gravity?
7. When the animals went in two by two,
   Which was the one with the kangaroo?

PAX.

Answers to Acrostic No. 217 should be addressed to the Acrostic Editor, The Strand Magazine, Southampton Street, Strand, London, W.C.2, and must arrive not later than by the first post on August 12th. They must be written on half-sheets of notepaper or on cards; at the foot of the solution must appear the solver's pseudonym, which must consist of one word only. Nothing else should be written on the same paper. Flimsy paper should not be used.

To every light one alternative answer may be sent, provided that it is written at the side.

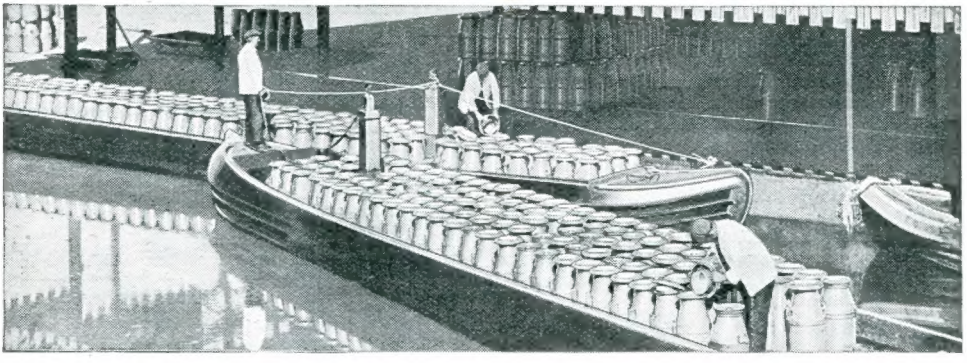
ANSWER TO DOUBLE ACROSTIC No. 216.

1. T	angen	T
2. H	iliarc	H
3. E	rskin	E
4. P	ickwic	K
5. O	rang	E
6. T	heno	T
7. A	sena	T
8. N	ilitera	L
9. D	ieuz	E

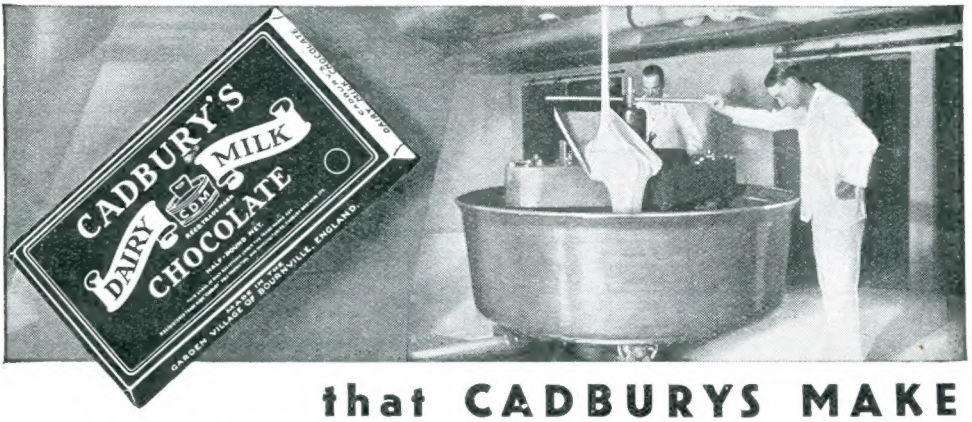
Notes.—Light 1. One word and two, several meanings. 2. Chiliarch, leader of 1,000 men; C, 100. Liar, the central letters. 3. Kin, in Erse; Ebenezer Erskine; Ebenezer, stone of help. 4. Pick Wick; Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Winkle. 5. Blenheim Orange, an apple, not an orange; an ogre. 6. Fletcher, The Faithful Shepherdess, Act 4, scene 5. Light 7. Hippo, Saint Augustine; Terah, father of Abraham; Potipherah, father of Asenath. Genesis, ch. 41. Light 8. Uniliteral, consisting of one letter. 9. Edmond About.

OVER 900 BRITISH FARMS

supply the FULL-CREAM MILK that



goes into the MILK CHOCOLATE



that CADBURYS MAKE

—and that's why you'll say 'I + + WANT + +

CADBURY'S

PERPLEXITIES

1,063.—FIND THE BACHELORS.

THE State of Bolonia is strictly monogamous, and its people are so patriotic that they never marry outside the State. Its matrimonial statistics supply us with this little problem :—

The returns for a recent year show that 4.2 per cent. of the male, and 2.8 per cent. of the female native unmarried population on the 1st January were married during the ensuing twelve months. What percentage of the unmarried Bolonians on the said date were of the male sex?

1,064.—ANAGRAM ACROSTIC.

CAN you re-arrange these nine phrases to form nine 9-letter words? :—

1. A GRAND TIE.
2. BEER IN HAT.
3. NEAT PROSE.
4. HE RUBS TAN.
5. TONY ITEMS.
6. HEARS LEAR.
7. I HATE CORK.
8. CITY SENSE.
9. A SPY SPIED.

You will know that your transpositions are correct when you find that the initial letters read downwards form the title of this magazine.

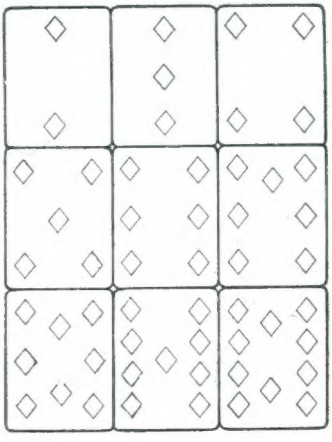
1065.—A LETTER SUM.

I HAVE used a 10-letter keyword for the figures from 0—9, in the following subtraction and addition sums. I wonder how far you can discover the code by pure deduction, and how soon it will be necessary to proceed by "trial and error" :—

APPLES	APPLES
LESS	MORE
AMESAI	APRSNA

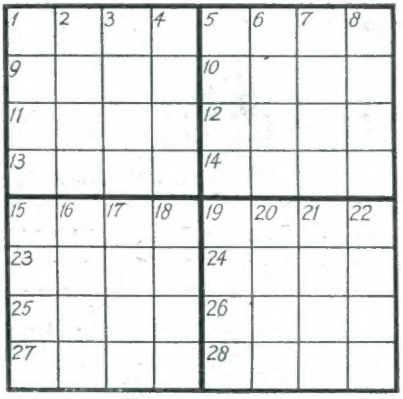
1,066.—SQUARE DIAMONDS.

HERE you have the two to the ten of Diamonds, inclusive. Can you re-arrange them, still retaining the shape of the figure, so that the "pips" total eighteen, across and down, in each line, and also diagonally from the corners?



1,067.—A SPECIAL CROSSWORD.

CROSSWORD puzzles are usually very difficult, or pleasantly intriguing, or bewildering through alternative solutions. As I do not know to which class the following belongs, I—like many another dealer in wares of a dubious kind—fancifully label it "special"!



CLUES.

ACROSS.

1. Burrowing animal.
5. Body of musicians.
9. Breakwater.
10. Form into a league.
11. Blemish on human skin.
12. Fillet.
13. Its hills make mountains.
14. Full of Hope it abstains.
15. Piece of tobacco.
19. Obligation.
23. Vulgar sovereign.
24. Tax.
25. What Cæsar asked.
26. Respect.
27. Twenty-fifth of a pony.
28. Customs.

DOWN.

1. Printers' measures.
2. Is indebted.
3. Measures taken when given inches.
4. Facility.
5. Insects.
6. Quite indefinite articles.
7. Half of one down.
8. Four pence.
15. Tails.
16. Employ.
17. Affirmative voters.
18. Two doctors of divinity.
19. Add up to 2,000.
20. Handle.
21. Annoy.
22. Sage.

Solutions to Last Month's Puzzles.

1,059.—SEASIDE ANAGRAMS.

1. —a new gas—SWANAGE. 2. —tube so near—EASTBOURNE. 3. —army hut. O—YARMOUTH. 4. —near by he—HERNE BAY. 5. —dull and no—LLANDUDNO. 6. —shot or put—SOUTHPORT.

1,060.—UP OR DOWN?

THE water fell. While the iron was in the boat, it displaced (through the agency of the boat) its own *weight* of water; when it reposed in the bottom it displaced only its own *volume* of water, a much smaller quantity.

1,062.—THE COUNTRYWOMAN'S EGGS.

IF x be the number of eggs she brought to town, the number sold at the first house was $\frac{1}{2}x + 1$, leaving her with $\frac{1}{2}x - 1$ eggs.

At the second house she sold $\frac{1}{4}x - \frac{1}{2} + 2$, leaving her with $\frac{1}{4}x - \frac{1}{2} - 2$ eggs.

At the third house she sold $\frac{1}{8}x - \frac{1}{4} - 1 + 3$, which leaves her with $\frac{1}{8}x - \frac{1}{4} - 1 - 3$, and this latter number is 0.

$$\frac{1}{8}x - \frac{1}{4} - 1 - 3 = 0.$$

Whence x is 34.

She brought 34 eggs to town.